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By EDITH E. READ MUMFORD, M.A., Author of "The Dawn of Character," "A Study of Child Life," etc.

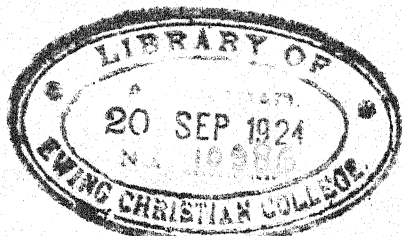
This little book owes its existence to a Correspondence Column conducted month by month in the pages of the "Sunday School Chronicle," and the Subjects dealt with possess a special and a living interest from the fact that they have been suggested by difficulties of which little children had themselves become conscious. In two previous books—"The Dawn of Character" and "The Dawn of Religion"—the writer endeavoured to interpret from their own point of view the experiences of children in our own day and generation brought up amid happy and sympathetic surroundings, and to trace the development of their moral and spiritual nature. The present book, in which special points are discussed in greater detail, forms a valuable sequel.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION,  
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THE  
DAWN OF CHARACTER

*A STUDY OF CHILD LIFE*



EDITH E. READ MUMFORD, M.A.

CLOTHWORKERS' SCHOLAR, GIRTON COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

LECTURER ON "CHILD TRAINING" AT THE PRINCESS CHRISTIAN TRAINING COLLEGE  
FOR NURSES, MANCHESTER

*SEVENTH IMPRESSION*

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"This is a book which will rank with the works of the masters of child study. We commend it without reservation to all desirous of possessing a reliable and rational guide to a child's character building."—*The Child*.

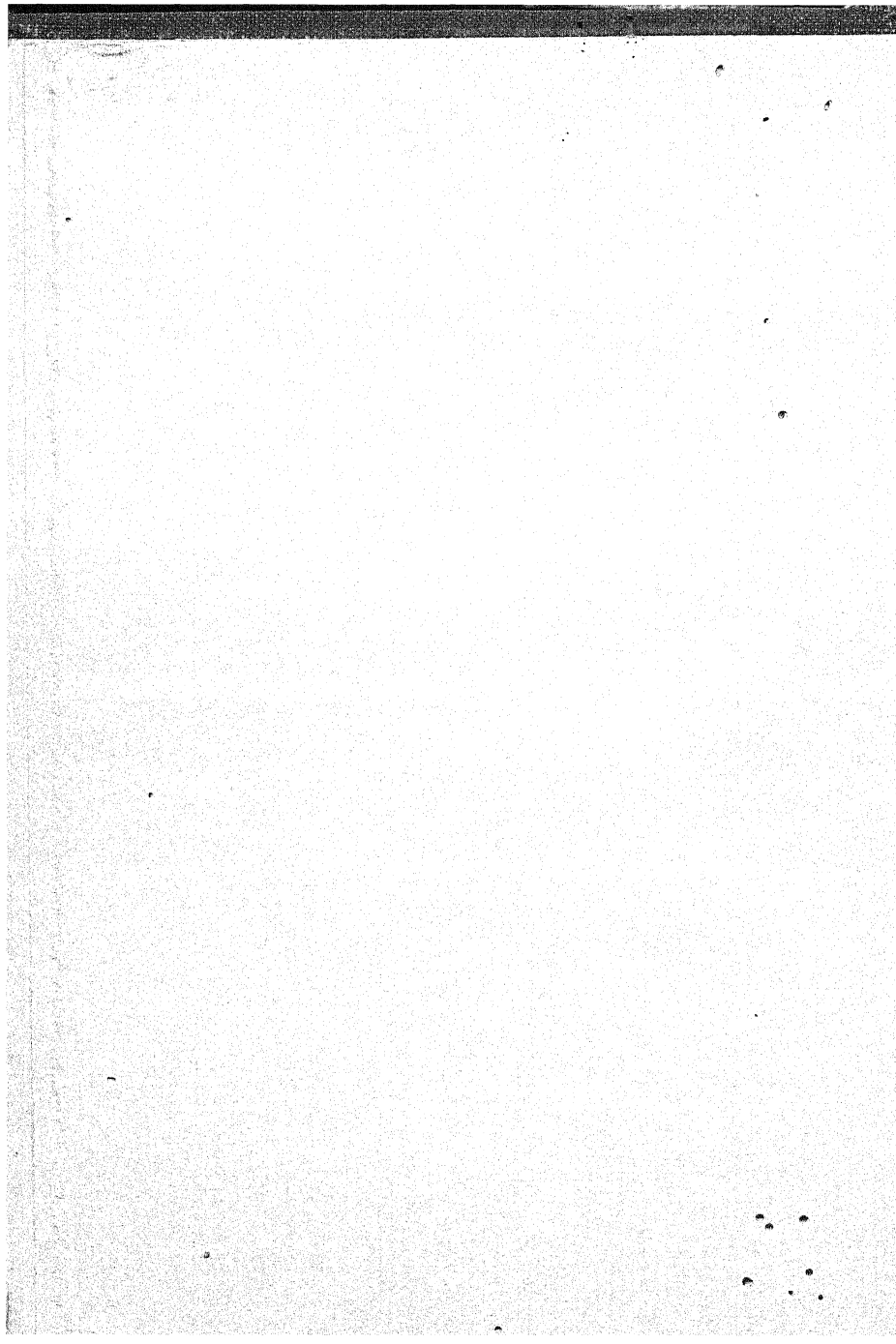
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TO A GROUP  
OF  
FIVE LITTLE TEACHERS,  
THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY  
DEDICATED







## PREFACE.

MANY are called upon to be responsible for children, who have come but little into close contact with them. Unfamiliar with children's natures and with children's ways, they are yet constantly required to act, and to act on the spur of the moment. Mistakes, under such circumstances, are almost inevitable ; mistakes which often entail suffering to the child and disappointment to parent or teacher.

To many, fortunately, mother-wit comes so readily, that it hardly seems necessary for them to prepare themselves for their task. But I believe there are not a few who would face their responsibilities with more joy and confidence, if they knew somewhat of the natural workings of the child's mind.

We cannot rightly judge the child from our own standpoint ; he is not "man-writ-small," but an unknown quantity, "man-in-the-making".

In this book, my endeavour has been to interpret the child's experiences from his own point of view. Both in the earlier psychological chapters, in which I have tried to trace his own development ; and in the later chapters, concerned with his development in relation to us and our



attitude towards him ; the aim has been to see, as far as possible, with the child's eyes. Those who are actually occupied with children, whether as parents, teachers or nurses, need a Psychology which is, above all else, a *living Science*. Theory must grow out of, and constantly be kept in touch with, practical experience of children's ways.

One word more. It is often assumed that a child's happiness is in proportion to his freedom to do exactly as he likes, and that discipline and method in his upbringing, at any rate as far as the home is concerned, will result in less freedom, and consequently in less joy. This I cannot believe, unless it be that the child has not been understood. Through whole-hearted obedience to a reasonable law, the child should find a truer liberty ; through the strengthening of the higher, and weakening of the lower, impulses of his nature, he should find greater happiness. The justification of discipline is that by helping the child to overcome the difficulties of his nature, it not only increases his mental and moral efficiency as he grows to manhood, but adds to the fullness and joy of his life while he is yet young.

In conclusion, I should like to express my thanks to those without whom the book would never have been written—to those who, by their love and understanding, made my own childhood full of joy ; to those early teachers, chief among whom are Dr. Sophie Bryant and Rev. Stopford Brooke, to whose influence, as I look back, I can trace the main thoughts that underlie this book ; to Professor Carveth Read, of the University of London, for his kindness in reading the chapters on



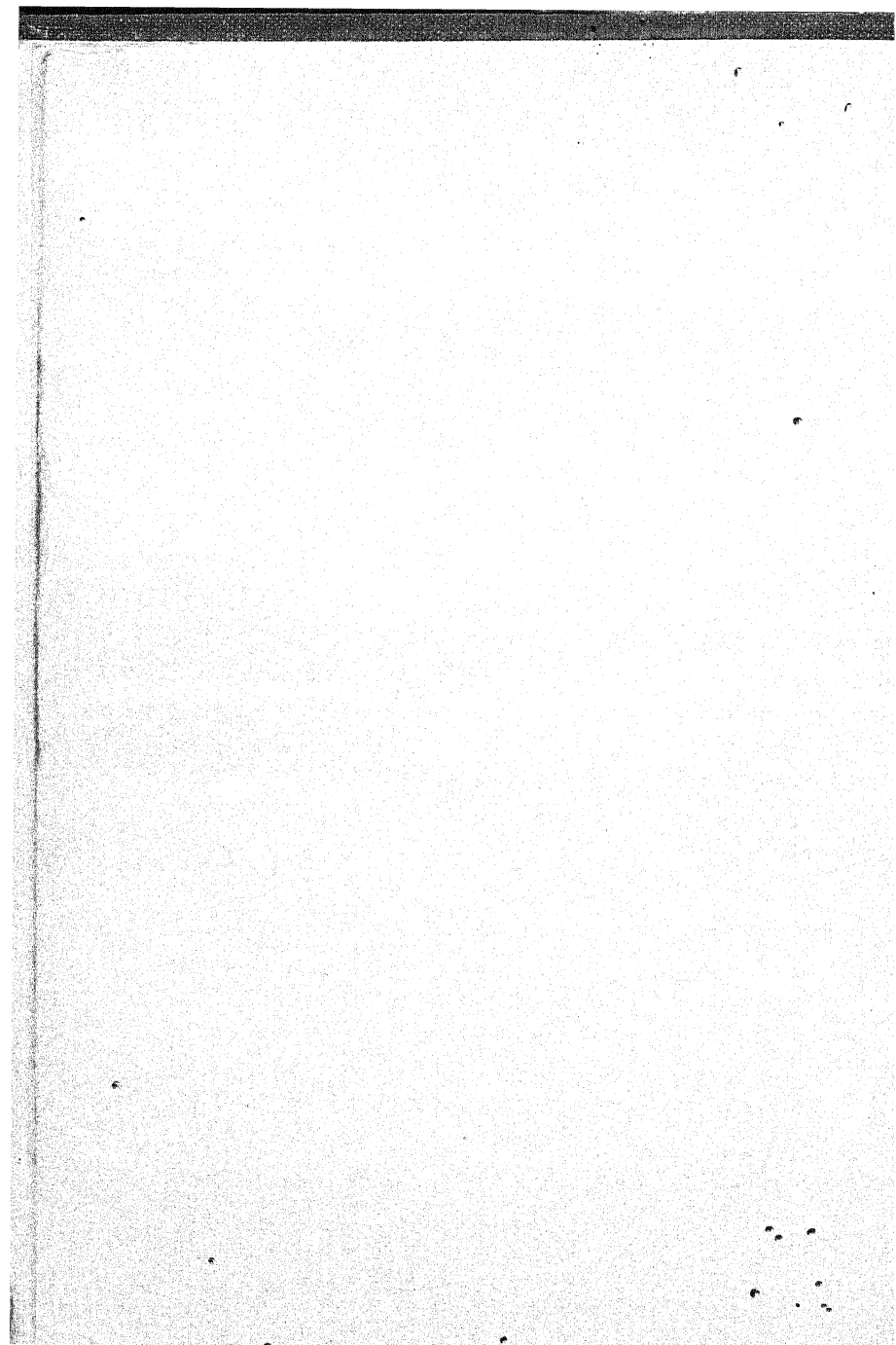
Psychology ; to Mr. A. H. Hope,<sup>1</sup> who has helped me throughout with valuable criticism ; and, above all, to my husband. He has not only helped me to interpret my experiences, he has shared them with me. As together we have thought over any difficulty, his larger standpoint has helped to widen mine, his sense of humour to hold the balance true. I am proud to acknowledge my indebtedness to him.

EDITH E. READ MUMFORD.

WITHINGTON,  
MANCHESTER, *August*, 1910.

<sup>1</sup> Joint author, with Mr. Norwood of Bristol, of "The Higher Education of Boys in England".







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## CHAPTER I.

### A PLEA FOR A CLOSER STUDY OF CHILD LIFE.

Advantages gained from a more intimate knowledge of child life—Want of method in dealing with children—Absence of aim—Advantages of further study on the part of those who are not directly responsible for children—Influence of environment—Need for self-criticism—Wider outlook of those who are not in daily contact with children—"It is a very responsible thing to be grown-up, for we become part of the causation of life"—Need of preparation to meet such responsibility—Elementary child psychology should be taught to every girl before she leaves school—Such psychology must be *practical*, in touch with child life—Our attitude towards "difficult" children—National child study.

SUCH a subject as Child Study should require no justification. It is really no new thing, for there have always been many particularly gifted and sympathetic natures who have realized the importance of obtaining a true insight into child life. It only seems to be new, because general opinion is steadily growing in the direction of admitting that all who are placed in charge of children, whether in the nursery or in the early days of school life, have as much need of training and preparation in the principles of growth, and in the physical, mental and moral aspects of childhood, as sick-nurses have of special medical and surgical training for the care of children in grave sickness. Such preparation and training need to be accurate and detailed. Principles must be clearly understood, and their practical issues grasped. Vague observation of children, however sympathetic it may be, will not give those in charge the insight that is needed to understand, nor the foresight that is needed to act wisely. Yet the insight and foresight which are gained from an intimate knowledge of child life, enable those who are called upon to deal with children to do so with a power of independent judgment, which frees them from worry and the bias of sentiment.



tality, and endows with a deeper interest all the details of early child life.

It is a matter of common experience that a tiny infant behaves differently with different people—he will fret in the arms of a nervous person, and cease from fretting directly he is taken over by one who has the confidence, begotten of experience, that she can make him comfortable. If this is true of an infant in arms, it is far truer of older children. "Handle them firmly and they will not sting you," says Mr. Paton in his lecture on "The Genus Boy"—and this, though said of boys of older growth, is true of children of younger age. If we are confident of success in dealing with them, it is half the battle. We must get the knowledge which dispels the doubt.

It is a common habit for us, when in authority over children, to fritter away our strength in useless and ineffectual action, because we have not understood clearly the nature of the difficulty with which we are called upon to deal. Sometimes we are over-zealous in helping the children, when they would be better helping themselves. Sometimes we "nag" at them, when it would be more effective to punish them, or else to leave them alone. Sometimes we weakly yield, when we ought to hold out firmly, and we then lay up sources of future difficulties. Sometimes we are over-insistent in exacting obedience in details, forgetting the principle which underlies the details. We go one step too far, and there is a struggle—a struggle which is harmful, as all unnecessary struggles are, and which could have been avoided by the exercise of greater wisdom on our part. More than half our difficulties are due to our clumsy way of going to work.

Why are we so clumsy in our method, or want of method, in dealing with our children? Mainly because, even when we have an intense love for them and desire to do the best we can for them, we have no clear idea of the pathway along which we wish them to travel, and no exact knowledge of their powers and limitations. We allow our affections to override our judgment, and purchase immediate pleasure at the expense of future harm; and even if we cherish an ideal, we have no clear conception of the broad general lines which we wish to follow in our method of control and guidance.



Let us then first consider some general aim or ideal which we may pursue, and subsequently the methods by which we may hope to attain this ideal. When we know what kind of person we want our child to be, we may ask ourselves how far he is capable of working towards that end now. The nursery, the home and the early school life afford a foundation upon which all the fuller manifestations of character will subsequently be built. Development proceeds by slow stages. Many of its stages have their own particular characteristics, so that those of one stage would not be representative of those of another; nor is outward behaviour enough. We want, in home and school, to produce something more than nicely behaved children, quite as certainly as we want in the future something more than mere orderly citizens. We shall not be satisfied if our boy's wits alone are sufficiently cultivated to enable him to obtain personal advantages in competition with his fellows, to be among the fittest who, surviving in the struggle, succeed in pushing the weakest to the wall. If this were the complete ideal before us, we might as well give up any attempt at moral education. The real educator and trainer of children desires the whole nature to develop at once, mentally, physically, morally and spiritually. Though the world is not a school obviously planned for the cultivation of virtue, it is still an arena in which the moral qualities shine forth, and the moral fibre is strengthened by conflict.

What is this ideal we should have in our minds of the kind of man or woman we want the child under our care to become? Our ideal man must be a citizen and a worker among men—not an ascetic or a visionary: his mind must be full: his energies must be alert, and ready to be directed into any useful beneficial channel that seems to demand them. Moreover, the complexity and variety of occupations and interests in such a man's life will be so great, that he must have a well-balanced judgment—able to select some objects on which he may bestow his sympathy and exclude others: he must not waste upon trifles the energies which are needed for the more important duties of his life. There must be a transparency and simplicity in all his actions that they may be read by all men. He must be honest in endeavour and generous in appreciation of others; strong-willed, large-hearted, large-minded, and large-souled.

There is no break in the development of conscious life



The good man or woman begins to come into existence when the little one is but entering on a conscious reasoning life. The so-called drudgery of daily life in the nursery—the persistent questions of eager little people—their mischief, their temper, their caprices—the struggles and numberless little duties—can only be efficiently met and wisely faced when we have fixed our ideal high. We do not lay any such large ideals before the child : it is sufficient for him to cultivate the so-called commonplace virtues ; to lay, in nursery or school, the foundations of self-control, bravery, humility and honesty. He will only learn slowly to appreciate the relative moral value of different “ends” of human conduct, and to reserve his energies for that most worth the doing. In guiding the growing nature from our wider standpoint, we must lay the foundations of his character on a broad basis, so that, when he grows to manhood, they may not be found too narrow. We must strengthen his impulses into the determined will, so that, when he is grown, nothing shall thwart him in the performance of that which he has set before him. In his childhood, we must try, gradually and surely, to help him to be, strong enough to do the right, so that when he is his own master, high purposes may be, not only attractive but irresistible, imperatively demanding his adherence, so that he can be satisfied with nothing less.

What more is needed than that we should know the ideal towards which we are striving ? We should understand what forces are naturally at work in the child, and how far these can work themselves out unaided. When a gardener plants a seed, if he wants that seed to produce a perfect plant of its kind, he needs to know, not only the nature of the full-grown plant, but the natural laws concerned in the development of plant-life in general, and of that special plant in particular. Unless he knows that, he can be no judge as to how far and in what direction he may interfere. His interference, if he be an over-zealous gardener, may do more harm than good. He might have done better to have left the plant to Nature alone. So with the educator and the child. Without some knowledge of the laws of moral growth, a strict disciplinarian is likely to do more harm than good.

This is sometimes seen in the case of a strong-willed and therefore, in his early years, a rebellious child, who is brought



up in an atmosphere of rigid discipline. With wise and sympathetic treatment, such a child would gradually acquire self-control, learning to subordinate his will to those who were rightly in a position of authority over him. But if these rebellious feelings, instead of being understood, are treated as wholly wrong, as something to be stamped out, we may "break his will," as it is called, and so weaken his whole nature more or less permanently; or we may get apparent submission on the outside, hiding the feelings of rebellion within, and then, directly the opportunity occurs of freedom from discipline, the ungoverned forces of his nature will break out in whatever direction they choose. The strong forces of the will which lay at the root of the rebellious instinct have been in any case wasted. "Better allow the wheat and the tares to grow together than, in our blindness, pluck up the wheat for the tares."

The gardener, having learnt the nature of the seedling entrusted to his care, having learnt the laws which govern its growth, plants it at the right time, so that the influence of sun and moisture may come in due course. Then he watches, acting cautiously, always with his end in view. He occasionally interferes, pruning or developing, until he ultimately sees the seedling grow into the full-grown and perfect plant of its kind. And even then he has yet more to learn. And the educator, holding on to an ideal of the good man or woman, and studying the special tendencies of the little human being, fulfils towards the child the function which the gardener fulfils towards the plant, steadily training, rarely pruning, and never violently disturbing.

Each day yields not one but many problems, and solutions are demanded on the spur of the moment, without time for thought. That is the hardest part. We not only need to be able to act wisely and consistently, but we must be ready to act at once. Any intuition, which we may feel ourselves to possess in dealing with children, needs therefore to be supplemented by observation and careful study. Given greater knowledge and foresight on our part, struggles will be to a large extent avoided.

Faults in children are problems to be understood, and not obstacles to be forcibly removed. Force is no remedy. Knowledge is needed as well as love. Every difficulty in dealing



with children should leave those in charge wiser and better equipped to deal with the next difficulty.

But what about those who are neither parents, nurses nor teachers? Why should there be any need for Child Study on their part? *They* are not specially responsible for children's upbringing. The necessity of Child Study for parents, and for others who are in a responsible position, is perhaps to a certain extent evident; but where is the gain to those who only come into contact with children occasionally, and even then have no direct responsibility?

Can any one of us say that we have *no* responsibility? The child's character is plastic in early years, he unconsciously responds to all impressions received from without, and not only to impressions consciously made upon him by those responsible for his upbringing. Environment is to a child what atmosphere is to a physical organism—its effect is all-powerful, though unconscious, moulding the character, the habits of life and thought of the child. The parent is responsible as an individual for the training of his own offspring, nurses and teachers must be equipped to carry out the duties which they undertake, but *we are all responsible as citizens for the coming generation*—the citizens of to-morrow. Since we cannot help influencing the children, are we not all bound to try to understand them, in order that such influence as we exert, whether consciously or unconsciously, may be exerted for good?

The child is a bundle of tendencies—a mass of potentialities—desirable and undesirable, and the child's character develops for good or ill, in accordance with the one set of tendencies or the other. Deliberate repression of the undesirable tendencies, deliberate and conscious cultivation of the desirable tendencies, does much in the training of character; but deliberate training is of little avail, if the lives of those with whom the child is in close contact are at variance with the teaching of the home and school. Our characters, and children's characters, are moulded far more by unconscious influences than by those of which we are conscious. An ill-educated daughter of the slums, in one of "Punch's" pictures, was represented as saying to her younger sister: "If the woman comes with the tracts, tell her to leave them with the lady next door".

On the other hand, a boy, aged 6, away at boarding-school,



used to talk of the lady who came to his house to do the washing. Evidently the charwoman was not treated by his home people as if she were of a different social status to themselves. The true democratic spirit had been developed in him unconsciously. Children reflect, though they do not know it, the lives and thoughts of their elders.

Frank, aged 6, was anxious not to share with his brothers and sisters a toy, which had just been given to him. He was not forced to share by those in authority, the toy was his, and he had therefore the right of sole possession, but he knew that the sharing of pleasures was a habit of life with those about him, and he felt that it must be copied. "I do wish it was the *thing* for people to be selfish," he murmured, as, at first hesitatingly, he began to share his toy. Rapidly his mood changed when he had once started sharing, and the enjoyment in the toy was increased, not diminished.

Two little mites of 4 and 5 were playing at "house". One was "the baby," the other "the mother". "We're playing at children," one of the mites explained to a passer-by. "Nurse has gone out and Mother is putting the children to bed, so we're having extra treats"—a reflection again of the life around, of the one night made special, when Mother took charge of the nursery.

Criticizing ourselves, rather than criticizing the children, is a branch of Child Study the importance of which is, I think, too little realized. We are thoughtless in the presence of children, talk glibly about "little pitchers having long ears," and rouse an unhealthy curiosity by suddenly ceasing our conversation, by talking French, or by hinting at possibilities fraught with mystery to the child. These things are as tantalizing to the child as it is tantalizing to us to receive a letter with something scratched out so carefully that it is evident it was not meant for us to read! So-called "white lies" are told in the children's presence; gossip is talked; their questions are often thoughtlessly, sometimes untruthfully, answered; their looks and their doings are discussed in their presence; they are either "shown off" or thrust heedlessly into the background—and all the while the child's character is being moulded unconsciously by the impressions so received. I once read of a child who had been severely reprimanded by his mother in the presence of a third person



for some childish fault which he had committed. The presence of the outsider at all in the circumstances was hard enough, but, just as the child was leaving the room, he heard his mother make some remark to her friend, making light of the fault which she had before been treating apparently so seriously. He was a sensitive, serious little chap. The impression thus made was never eradicated. His mother's influence over him was lost from that moment. Latent impulses of revenge or jealousy are often thoughtlessly encouraged by telling the child to "hit the naughty floor" when he falls and hurts himself, or by suggesting that "his nose will be put out of joint now," he is no longer "Mother's pet," when a new baby arrives to share with him the kingdom of home. Such remarks are thoughtlessly made, they are not meant to be taken seriously—but a small child does not understand.

To keep in touch with the child means a bigger effort—more Child Study—than we realize. When we grow up we often put "childish things" *too* far behind us—the child's vivid imagination to which nothing is commonplace or ordinary—his keen zest for play—his readiness to admire—his receptive heart—his instant desire to put ideas into practice—his fear of the unknown when so much is unknown—even the recollection of all this is put too far behind. The result of our having grown up is that we are often unnecessarily hard on the children, not pausing to see how natural a child's so-called faults often are. We too should want to walk along the streets looking behind us all the time, if we were sufficiently absorbed in what was going on—just as we keep turning to get one last look when we have said good-bye to a friend! If we were as delightfully free from self-consciousness as a child, and had his capacity for enjoying everything, *we* should ask for chocolates if we saw them. I do not say that the child must not learn to behave differently, but that we should realize that many apparent faults in behaviour are natural expressions of vitality. To enter into the child's world we need to look back into our own childhood and recall old memories. It sometimes seems as if our own experience of childhood had gone past recall, but, when watching the children closely, sympathetically, something that we see in them revives old memories in us, and helps us to draw close to the tiny people. Our view of life—even of our own life—widens as we



look at the present in the dim light of the past ; with the wider outlook comes comprehension and faith—comprehension and faith not only for ourselves, but for the children. "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

We are able then, by closer companionship, to help the children, and this companionship in turn helps us. The world is richer for grown-up people, if their circle of friends includes children, for of "such is the Kingdom of Heaven". The friendship of children helps to keep alive in us that sense of wonder and joy, of the freshness and beauty of life, that faith in the Unseen, that power of energy and strength of imagination, which belongs peculiarly to the young. Huxley always had a great tenderness for children, and, in his old age, his love of children "brimmed over (writes his son) with undiminished force, unimpeded by circumstances". Children seemed to have a natural confidence in him, they felt that no appeal would be rejected, whether for help in distress, or for the satisfaction of the child's desire for knowledge. Stevenson was the richer for his child lovers, to one of whom, whose birthday, sad to say, was on February 29th, he once solemnly bequeathed, by written deed of gift, his own birthday and his own name. Sir W. Scott spent whole days of happiness with little "Maidie," (the "Marjory Fleming" immortalized by Dr. John Brown,) whom Sir Walter used to carry off in the corner of his plaid and play with for hours. "The year before Maidie died," writes Dr. Brown, "when in Edinburgh, she was at a Twelfth Night supper at Scott's in Castle Street (she was 7 years old). The company had all come—all but Marjory—Scott's familiars, whom we all know, were there—all were come but Marjorie; and all were dull, because Scott was dull. 'Where's that bairn? What can have come over her? I'll go myself and see.' And he was getting up and would have gone, when the bell rang, and in came Duncan Roy and his henchman Dougald, with the sedan chair, which was brought right into the lobby, and its top raised. And there in the darkness and dingy old cloth, sat Maidie, in white, her eyes gleaming, and Scott, bending over her in ecstasy, 'hung over her enamoured'. 'Sit ye there, my dautie, till they all see you;' and forthwith he brought them all. You can fancy the scene. And he lifted her up and marched to his seat with her on his stout shoulder



and set her down beside him; and then began the night, and such a night! Those who knew Scott best said that night was never equalled; Maidie and he were the stars."

But more than joy is gained as a result of loving children more and knowing them better. More intimate knowledge leads to greater respect. The self-willed and probably passionate child—the mischievous child, who is always needing some fresh outlet for his superabundant energy—the child who is for ever propounding questions which only a few people know enough to answer—the highly imaginative child, who finds it difficult to distinguish truth from falsehood—on a superficial acquaintance, such children, (if they belong to other people, if they are only fellow-creatures and nothing more,) are a nuisance. They break in upon the peace and comfort of life, they make work and worry for all around. But if we look below the surface, we gain respect even for these "ugly ducklings". When a mite of 3½ asserts his opinion in opposition to ours with the words, "Don't you conterindinck me"; or when, in spite of his consciousness of the inevitableness of nursery discipline, he says, "Did you say I was to do dat? Den I won't," we realize and admire the pluck of the mites, opposing their lesser to our greater strength. A little lad under 3 had just been got out of the bath, when something prompted him to tell his mother to "shut up". He was warned that if this expression were repeated, his mother would leave him, and the nurse would come and finish bathing him. The mite drew up his naked body to its full small height, and, looking straight at his mother, hurled out the words: "Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up!" Dirt is said to be matter in the wrong place; childish sins are energy, force of character, turned in the wrong direction. There is a wonderful nobility in the way a boy can stand up and receive the punishment which he knows he has earned—there are no grumbles, no tears; like a brave man he can face the inevitable unflinchingly. Your "naughty child," as Mrs. Bryant says, "is unfinished rather than wicked"—it is our business to see children not only as they are, but also as they have it in them to be.

Increased knowledge leads, then, to increased respect, and again what we respect, we learn to understand better. Now, in this growth of knowledge, those who are not in constant contact



with the same children have in certain respects an advantage over mothers and nurses. The mother is occupied day in, day out, with a mere handful of children; never able to get right away from her task, so as to look at the children with the impartial eyes of an outsider, often she cannot see the wood for the trees. She therefore tends either to exaggerate, or to be blind to, the children's defects, as the case may be. Moral growth is necessarily slow, and those who are trying day by day to promote such moral growth, are often impressed by the slowness of it, rather than by the growth itself. Those who are not thus responsible for a few children as individuals, who only come into contact with them occasionally, can the more readily detect changes in moral, as they can and do in physical, growth. Their outlook should be wider; they have had the opportunity of watching so many different types of children. If they have used these opportunities, they should have experience with which they can encourage the mothers.

But such experience is helpful only in so far as it is rightly interpreted; it must be based upon facts, not only sympathetically observed, but observed critically and with a reasoned insight. Child Study is valuable, not only to those who are directly concerned with children, but also to those who, less directly concerned, are free to gain a wider outlook over the child-world.

One and all of us are responsible for the children; our influence is greater than we think. If, then, we realize and accept this responsibility as inevitable, in what way can we prepare ourselves and our girls to meet it?

Every girl before she leaves school, should have some knowledge of the working of the child's mind, in order that her interest in child-life may be widened, her insight into the child's point of view made truer, her companionship with the little ones closer.

There should surely be no difficulty in adding a course of Child-Psychology to the present scheme of Housewifery in vogue in many schools. A single short course of lessons should be enough. The facts which need to be grasped, in Psychology as in Physiology, are few, simple, and, when accompanied by illustrations in the form of stories of child life, self-evident. All-girls from 16 to 18 would be readily interested, and the



subject would be within the comprehension of every one of them.

But teaching that is to be real, helpful and inspiring, must be *practical*—not the Psychology of the study, but of the nursery, full of the humour and vitality which belongs to childhood, not overweighted with close reasoning. Our girls are not being trained to become psychologists, they will be *living* among children, perhaps themselves *handling* children. They do not need to be overburdened with a single intellectual fact over and above what will help them to understand and enter into children's ways.

My own belief is that the greater interest in children that would result from the adoption of a plan of this kind, if carried out generally and by the right people in the right way, would so widely spread the right sort of love of, and interest in, children—the love that overrides difficulties—that our present danger of a diminishing birth-rate among the middle classes would be visibly lessened; for the mother so instructed would more readily accept her responsibilities, which would present themselves to her as privileges rather than as drudgery. A family of children at the present time is often felt to be a burden and an expense, more than it is felt to be a source of riches and joy.

But, be that as it may, the gain to the children who are already in our midst, especially the so-called "difficult" and "naughty" ones among them, would be great. Some children are liked by every one; some are liked by few and disliked by many—disliked often because not understood, constantly "rubbed the wrong way". The most unlovable and unlovely child is so, either because he has inherited as a birthright too many unsocial impulses, or because, though he began life well equipped, circumstances have in some way told against him. Some one, it may be, stepped on him "when he was a little fellow". In either case, is it his fault? Are not *we* responsible? Surely such little sinners make an even greater demand upon our love than "the ninety and nine who need no repentance".

But love, you may say, must be spontaneous, it cannot be commanded. True; but interest and attention can be cultivated, and interest makes for knowledge, knowledge increases



understanding, understanding generates sympathy, and sympathy will blossom into love. If a child seems to us "not nice," and jars upon our sensibilities, then the fault is surely ours, that, child though he is, we find him thus. The greater his moral weakness, the greater should be our consciousness of pity and love and longing to help. Physical weakness rarely arouses in us any other feeling. Why should moral weakness? Is it not only because we have never *thought*?

As for our girls, the start in the right direction should be enough. They will have learnt how to think. The result will be that, as they watch, they will grow to reverence more deeply, love more truly, and understand more clearly, not only the lovable children, but *all* children. The charity that hopeth all things, and believeth all things, is impelled by the heart; it is wisest when it is also guided by the head.

A few words in conclusion on the wider question of the need for a greater interest in childhood on the part of all earnest-minded people—what I might call National Child Study. We realize increasingly the needs of our own children: in many respects we have created in them artificial and undesirable needs. But beyond our special duty to them, we have a duty—a wider duty—towards the nation's children.

We need, as citizens, to combine together to prevent, as far as lies in our power, sickness and death and crime among the children, so organizing the life of the town that they shall be surrounded by fair sights and sounds and examples of high living, and shall be shielded from all that demoralizes the soul or deteriorates the body.

We need, each one of us, to show greater sympathy with those whose life work is with the young—mothers, nurses, teachers and governesses; greater respect for the "high vocation" to which they have been called; a greater appreciation of the incalculable value of their work, when faithfully done.

We need, as citizens, to see that the homes in which the children, our tiny fellow-citizens, dwell are more sanitary; that, in our large towns, there are more playing fields and open spaces, in which they gain health and strength through active exercise in the fresh air.

We need to help them to obtain more equal opportunities,



which we are now recognizing it is the duty of the State to provide.

We ought each one of us to feel responsible until the classes in Primary Schools are made smaller, so as to enable the teacher to take a more personal interest in the children. The classrooms should be beautiful, that the beauty, so often necessarily absent in the home, may yet, in the School, exert its unconscious influence for good on the growing child.

The children of to-day are the citizens of to-morrow. A race of sturdy, strong-willed, kind and thoughtful children is the highest result of a nation's greatness and the best guarantee of its future prosperity.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE CONTENTS OF THE CHILD'S MIND.

Contents of the mind of a grown-up person—Complexity—Elements due to sense-impressions, emotions, bodily sensations, memories—Focus and margin—Change in contents of consciousness—Continuity and unity—Subconsciousness—Contents of the child's mind—Practical value of psychological facts—Disobedience, forgetfulness, inattention—Dawdling and concentration of attention—Effect of constant prohibitions—The child's actions, the result of his special temperament and experience.

### PSYCHOLOGY OF ADULT—APPLICATION OF SAME.

BREAKFAST is over; we are all in the nursery together—Frank, Jessie, Molly, Baby and I. My morning duties are done and I am ready to take the children out for a walk. I move across the nursery to the cupboard to fetch their outdoor clothes; but my bodily movements are automatic and do not engage my attention. My mind is filled with impressions due to a number of things external to myself, which I see or hear, or which otherwise reach my mind through the medium of my senses, and with memories and thoughts for the most part associated with these. I hear, though vaguely, the sounds of the traffic outside; I am dimly aware of the temperature of the room.

Yesterday was an extra busy day and I am somewhat conscious of a slight feeling of weariness which makes the routine of nursery life more of a strain. I have had bad news this morning and, though I am not definitely thinking about that, a dim undercurrent of sadness colours for the time my outlook and lessens my pleasure in watching the children's play. Molly, the two-year-old baby, is trying to pull the hair



out of her Teddy bear, and I check her in the attempt. I see Frank and Jessie playing trains with the nursery chairs, Jessie, the one and only passenger, seated in the front. I hear Frank's shrill whistle as the train starts and his lusty cry of "London! Train starting for London!" His shout recalls to my mind the wee baby in the cradle, and I turn instinctively to see if the noise has disturbed his peace, but he is still sleeping; yet I remember that only yesterday Frank woke him up with his noise and that Baby was fretful all the morning in consequence; so I tell Frank to play as quietly as possible. Numberless thoughts and impressions fill my mind even in those few moments as I cross the room. I open the cupboard and begin to take out their clothes, and as I lift them out I think to myself: "It is a nice morning for the children to go to see their Granny; I will put on their better coats; she likes to see them looking dainty". Granny, and the mental picture of the children, recalls a further thought, that last time Granny met us she had remarked how badly Jessie's new coat had worn. In a flash of memory, I mentally compare that coat with one belonging to historic times which I myself had worn in childhood, which refused to look shabby, and which at last had been cut up and made into a cloak for my doll when I grew older! I must not forget, I say to myself, coming back to the coat beside me, to avoid buying that material again. So, as I proceed mechanically with my special occupation, my thoughts run on—my senses are alert, through them I am all the time receiving impressions; but memories, emotions, and sensations connected with my own body, my movements or my inactivity, my comfort or discomfort, all these are at the same time present in my mind.

*Our minds are never empty during waking hours, some kind of consciousness is always going on. This consciousness is not simple but complex; not a mere trickle of thoughts entering our minds one after the other, like beads threaded upon a string, but a full stream of conscious life. At any one moment the contents of our minds, our field of consciousness at that moment, contain impressions received through the senses, memories of things which have happened in the past, recollections of objects which are not beside us at that time, emotions due to the circumstances of the*



*moment or something quite outside ourselves, impressions of bodily movement or inactivity, of comfort or the reverse, these together forming a whole, which is our "field or state of consciousness," the contents of our minds at that particular moment.*

If Baby Molly suddenly choked as the result of trying to swallow some of the Teddy bear's fur—if Jessie fell as she was climbing on to her seat in the train—the emotion of anxiety, of compassion or fear, would at once predominate in my consciousness, appearing, for the time being, to determine exclusively the course of thought. But this is not the case. The other children are not entirely forgotten. Even while I am attending to Molly, other sounds are not unheard, I am not blind to all other sights. If I am comforting Jessie, and the thought of her trouble occupies my mind at that moment more than anything else, yet I still hear, though less distinctly, Frank's noisy shouts or see his sympathetic face; I do not wholly forget the sleeping baby, as I strive to quiet Jessie's sobs. The recollection of objects seen a few days ago in our walks comes back to me, and I try to distract her by suggesting that we shall go and see if the steam engine is still puffing up and down in the road not far off!

*The proportion of the different elements in our mind—sensations of touch or sight or hearing—of memories, of emotions, etc., varies from time to time, according to circumstances.* When the emotion of fear predominates, we get what we speak of as a state of fear, when we are conscious of but little else; when circumstances puzzle us and we know not what to do, our minds seem so filled with the feeling of perplexity that everything else escapes our attention; at times we are lost in memories and appear wholly oblivious to all that is going on around. But to some slight extent, the different elements are almost invariably present, although one preponderating element may be standing out much more clearly in consciousness than the others. The contents of our minds are always complex; one element never occupies the whole of our consciousness.

Yet, at any moment, there is generally something in our minds which stands out more clearly than the rest, of which we are most distinctly conscious. This we speak of as the *focus*



of consciousness; the rest constitutes the *margin*. Sometimes we are almost as vividly aware of some things in the margin as we are of the focus; attention then tends to become dispersed. Of other things in the margin we are generally less conscious; of some we are hardly definitely conscious at all.

Thus, thoughts connected with the clothes were in the focus of my mind as I stood by the cupboard. Jessie, Frank and Molly were at that moment attracting less attention, though perhaps not much less; the noises outside in the street, the sound of any one passing on the landing, the fire in the hearth, were in the dimmest margin of my consciousness. If, however, Jessie had run across the room to throw something in the fire, the fire would immediately share the focus with Jessie; if I had suddenly remembered that I had forgotten to give a message to the cook, and steps were heard outside the door, the footsteps, which might possibly belong to cook, would then be immediately in the focus and the clothes would retire into the margin.

*Whatever occupies the focus one second may not occupy it the next. Consciousness changes from moment to moment.*

It may seem occasionally as if this change in the contents of our minds were sudden or complete. Such a break is only apparent. Whether the sudden change of thought is due to some fresh element not before in consciousness, or whether that which is at one moment in the centre of consciousness is suddenly thrust into the dimmest margin, and what was before in the margin becomes the focus, in any case the change is partial only; the surroundings of the room, our bodily feelings, our vague sensations of light, of sound, of temperature, those dim elements in our thoughts connected with our past experiences—all this is unchanged.

*Consciousness may and does change from moment to moment; yet it is a continuous stream, and has for its possessor a unity and individuality of its own.*

One further point. What decided me to take the children to see their Granny on that particular morning? What determined my method of treating Molly or Jessie in their distress? The thought of seeing Granny seemed suddenly to flash through



my mind as I was looking at the coats; I did not definitely remember how long it was since the children had seen her last, yet I had an impression that it was about time they went again. I dimly recalled that last time I went with them I felt, after coming away, that Granny was disappointed that the children did not go oftener, though she had said nothing of the kind. All this was, however, vague and only momentarily in my mind—I made no deliberate decision. Who can say after all why many of the things we do in this way are done?

When Jessie hurt herself I did not stop to think how I should comfort her before acting. By instinct, as it were, I dealt with her in one way and with Frank and Molly in another, not so much as the result of my consciously acquired experience, as of numberless small experiences of which I am unaware.

*It is probable that, beyond the margin of consciousness, impressions are received of which we are practically unconscious, and which nevertheless play an important part in the modification of our mental life. This area of subliminal consciousness we speak of as sub-consciousness.*

### THE CHILD'S MIND.

Such are the broad psychological facts which it is helpful for us to grasp in considering the contents of the mind. At what stage in the child's development are they equally descriptive of the child-mind? And if they apply equally to him, what points of practical importance issue from them?

The mind of the tiny infant holds nothing more than a vague mass of indistinguishable sensations and feelings. Through his various sense organs, his eyes, his ears, his nose, his sense of touch, passively he receives numberless sense impressions; but he has as yet no power to discriminate amongst them, memory plays no part, there is nothing in consciousness which corresponds to a clear thought. Occasionally, when one or another impression is more intense than the rest, he more definitely responds—stretching out arms and legs to receive the warmth of the fire, fixing his eyes on the central point of light when the gas is lit. But that is all—he lives entirely in the present. Our complex consciousness, our distinction between focus and margin, our full stream of conscious life, are not yet his. But a



very short time passes before we can detect the beginnings of growth. I hold a tiny baby in my arms, his head resting against my cheek; and, at once, he moves his head this way and that, as if in the search for food. A definite impression has evidently been made upon his mind; he already associates the feeling of warm flesh with the pleasure of a meal! I pour the warm water into the bath, the baby hears the sound, and as soon as I pick him up, he kicks and crows in his delight. The sound of the water has evidently aroused memories, memories which are associated with the joyful sense of nakedness in front of the fire and the splash of the warm water.

When this occurs, the mind of the baby, like that of the grown-up person, already contains recognized sensations received from objects around, and memories connected with such sensations. The baby himself cannot yet distinguish between the two, but the distinction is there and clearly marked. Discrimination has begun, the vague is becoming definite.

How the child-mind develops from the vague simplicity of infant life into the definiteness and complexity of babyhood and childhood will concern us in the chapter on mental growth. Sensations gradually become clear and are associated together; impressions are retained and stored up in the memory; the child's knowledge of the outside world and of his own body as distinguished from other bodies, his knowledge of the connexion of events, bit by bit grow wider and more clearly defined, until, at 3 to 5 years old, the contents of his mind in many points resemble our own.

John, 5 years of age, is building in a corner of the nursery with his bricks; all his mind is concentrated on making this castle the finest ever built. He is dimly aware that it is nearly dinner-time, for he is getting hungry; he can see that Peggy and Martha are playing with their dolls on the other side of the room and that Nurse is feeding Baby and singing to him the while. He has a vague sense of uneasiness that Nurse will tell him to stop in a minute and go to wash his hands for dinner, and he is full of eager haste to finish this one block of the building first. With his mind's eye, he pictures a castle of bricks which he once saw in a shop window, and which he is now trying to copy, and he wonders if, when he has finished, Nurse will let him leave his castle in the corner for Mother to



see. He hears a sound of galloping horses outside in the road; Peggy and Martha run to the window, but John keeps on at his occupation.

His mind is infinitely fuller of thought than it was when he lay in his cradle only a few years ago, just beginning to discriminate between his different sensations. All his sensations have now become more definite; his emotions are largely influenced by his memories of things gone by, and no longer merely by the physical sensation of the moment, as in infancy. At any one moment, his mind now contains impressions of things outside, feelings connected with self, emotions and memories both definite and vague. Some things are most distinct in his mind, occupying the focus, e.g. all that is connected with his castle; other things are less distinct, e.g. the doings of the other children; of some things he is barely conscious, such as the sounds in the street.

Suddenly there is a cry from Peggy; Martha has taken away the dear dolly which Peggy was just tucking up in bed. Nurse turns to reprove Martha; John stops his building at once and runs across to comfort his sister. The castle has gone from the focus of his consciousness; perhaps for the moment it has left his mind altogether. The noises outside, the feeling of hunger, all are in the dimmest margin of his mind; his attention is now wholly concentrated on Peggy.

His mind is then similar to our own. There is the same stream of thought, the same complex field of consciousness with its focus and its margin, the same varying elements due to sensations and to memories, the same continuity, the same special chain of experiences belonging to him, which makes his stream of consciousness his and his alone. The only difference between his mind and ours lies in the greater clearness of our sense perceptions compared with his, the increased store of our memories owing to our wider experience, and of abstract ideas due to language and personal development, our greater power of control over the contents of our minds, owing to our capacity for voluntarily concentrating our attention.

#### PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTS.

The psychological facts laid down as descriptive of the grown mind are then equally descriptive of the child's mind. In what



way does a grasp of such facts help us practically in dealing with the children ?

Nurse is busy putting the younger children to bed. For a while longer, John is allowed to play in the nursery. His soldiers are set out on the table in battle array, and he is intent upon his game. Nurse looks in for a moment to tell him to clear up at once as it is nearly his bed-time. In a few minutes she returns ; but the soldiers are still fighting their battles and are not put away. John is reproved for disobedience, and goes to bed in disgrace. Now, *he may have deliberately disobeyed, choosing to continue his game rather than do what he was told. But it may also be that, when Nurse spoke to him, the focus of his mind was so entirely occupied with his plan of campaign, that her words never got beyond the margin of his consciousness.* For a moment they lingered in the dimmest margin, and then they ceased to be part of his consciousness at all. If so, he had forgotten ; but he had not intentionally disobeyed. *Or it may even be that his attention was so wholly concentrated on his soldiers that he never heard Nurse speak at all,* in which case he did not even forget. Was it not Nurse's business to see that he gave her his full attention when she spoke to him, so that her commands should enter the focus of his mind and have the best chance of being obeyed ? "Stop your game a minute, laddie, and listen to me," she might say. He looks up from his soldiers, Nurse is in the focus and the toys have had to withdraw into the margin. Then she adds : "In a few minutes it is your bed-time, so the battle must finish for to-night and you must clear up at once". After orders so given, disobedience is a punishable offence.

Again, let us suppose that Peggy is learning to get herself ready to go out for a walk. Boots in hand, she sits upon the floor—but the nursery is so full of things which are interesting to watch ! Nurse is dressing baby, the kitten is playing on the hearth, John is riding on the rocking-horse ; everything is interesting, but those boots ! "Don't look about you all the time, put on your boots, Miss Peggy," she hears Nurse say. "You are forgetting your boots again ; never mind the kitten, do pay attention to what you are supposed to be doing." In vain Nurse tries to make her quick ; Peggy persistently dawdles. —Where



does the fault in all probability lie? Keeping the same thing in the focus of her mind for long at a time, especially anything as uninteresting as boots, is an effort which she is not yet capable of making. The world is full of interest for her, and whatever strays into the margin of her consciousness, whether John, the baby, or the kitten, tends at once to usurp the place of whatever was originally in the focus. She is wanting in the power of concentration, and scolding alone will not cure her. What she has to do, in the first place, is to acquire the habit of fixing her attention on whatever she is doing, whether interesting or uninteresting. We must see that her toys are played with properly and not changed every few minutes from lack of absorption, that they are not scattered about unheeded on the floor, that her dolly is properly "mothered," and not hugged one minute and forgotten the next. She can play at being our "errand boy," and learn to run messages accurately without stopping to dawdle by the "road side". She can play at school, and in cutting out, paper folding, drilling exercises, learn to give her mind to simple tasks.

In various ways we must develop her power of concentrating her attention. The concentration, practised and strengthened in games, will help her to attend to less interesting tasks.

But while the effort of concentration is still great, we need to make it easier for her to fix her attention on duties which are dull and hard, when such duties have to be done. For the time, she must be removed from distracting interests. If she puts on her boots behind the screen in the day nursery, she can see nothing which will tempt her to dawdle; or if she goes by herself in a corner of the night nursery away from the window, on the understanding that the boots must be put on in a given time or punishment will follow, the task will be more quickly accomplished. The one thought—boots—is clearly in the focus of her consciousness, the marginal interests which would tend to drive the boots out of this central place are diminished, and at the same time in other ways her power of attention is being developed. *The greater the capacity of the child to observe and to be interested in all that goes on around, the greater the difficulty in learning to attend to any one thing in particular; and therefore the greater the necessity of deliberately training the power of concentration.*



Jessie and Frank are playing trains in the nursery, and Nurse is sewing beside them. She is called downstairs for a minute and, as she leaves the room, it occurs to her to turn back for a moment to tell the children on no account to touch or go anywhere near the fire! They had been absorbed in their game, but a new thought has been suggested to them, which, in Frank's active brain, quickly merges with the thoughts of the train—no idea lies fallow in his mind for long!

"Jessie, we don't need to go near the fire, but if there were only a blaze, we could pretend that the prairie was on fire and we had to pass through it at the risk of our lives." As he expresses the thought in words, its hold upon him increases. "Let's poke it to make a blaze; *that* can't hurt". If Nurse had said nothing, the children might have gone on with their game, and the thought of the fire would never have entered their heads. But into the margin of their minds, filled before almost completely with the interest of imaginary journeys, she had introduced a disturbing thought—disturbing, that is, to Frank, whose vitality was considerably, as yet, in excess of his desire to obey.

There is a certain type of child, easily recognizable, generally a boy, in whom action rapidly follows thought. Directly an idea enters, or is put into, the focus of his consciousness, he starts to put it into action, without stopping to consider the ultimate consequences of what he is doing. Sometimes the mere forbidding of an action is sufficient to arouse in him a desire for that action. He is the *bête noire* of a house-proud mother. As he comes along the hall, she calls to him not to slide "as it was polished to-day"; and as soon as the thought is suggested, his feet itch to slide! He stands looking out of the window rather near the glass, some one tells him not to breathe on the window as it makes it dirty; and he longs to breathe all over it! Not grasping the tendency of his nature, we are all the time suggesting actions to him, which would not otherwise have occurred to him, and we make him more troublesome by our constant injunctions. In dealing with such "motor" types of children, "Don't say don't," is the first maxim which we should lay to heart. *The motor energy, the desire to shape thought in action, is good; what is wanting is the power to stop, to consider and to judge.*



Mary, 5 years old, and little Ralph, aged 2, are out for a walk with Nurse. A big St. Bernard comes up to them—greatly to Ralph's delight and to Mary's terror. "Well, Miss Mary," says Nurse, "I would be ashamed to be so frightened if I were you. Just look at your little brother, and he only 2 years old, and you a big girl." Is Nurse fair in her judgment? As it happens, Ralph has stayed with an aunt who has a big dog similar to this one; a dog, who was his chief playmate all the while he was there; Mary, though older, has never stayed with that aunt, she has never lived in the house with a dog of any kind, and once she heard, and never could forget, the story of a child who was bitten. How could she, with her small experience, judge which were the biting, and which the gentle, dogs? The contents of Mary's mind on the subject of dogs differed, then, from that of Ralph's; she was therefore timid, when he knew no fear. *What we do is the result of our natural impulses to action, to a large extent modified by the contents of our consciousness.* The child's action under certain circumstances will necessarily differ from that of the grown-up person; different actions will be natural to different children. *The contents of their consciousness, not ours; their experience and not ours, determines their attitude;* we need to understand their point of view.

I have given only a few typical instances of difficulties in which we are helped to a better understanding of the children by a grasp of the elementary facts of the psychology of the child's mind. The focus and margin of the field of consciousness, the shifting of the focal and of the marginal elements, the part played by memory in the contents of consciousness and its influence upon action, the unity and individuality of the stream of consciousness, are not facts which concern only the student of psychology, they concern those who are actually handling the children, whether in home or school.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE GROWTH OF THE CHILD'S MIND.

The field of consciousness of the infant, a vague mass of undistinguished sensations—Repetition of experiences—Retention and gradual recognition—At first, the infant *passively* receives impressions; later, he *actively* explores and experiments—By observation, memory and comparison, he acquires knowledge of shape, size, substance, etc., and of the different "objects" about him—Aid of language in the growth of knowledge—Summary of the main psychological facts underlying mental growth—Connexion between memory and emotion—Interest, the connecting link between memory and attention—Voluntary and involuntary attention—Bearing of psychological facts on practical details of a child's life.

(1) *Laws which Govern Memory*—(a) Memory is increased by repetition—(b) Provided that attention is paid, or some interest taken.

(2) *Laws which Govern Interest*—(a) The strain of attending is less when the child is interested, it is therefore desirable to get him interested in what we want him to do—(b) Fresh interests can be created, when necessary, by working on the lines of the child's natural interests.

(3) *Laws which Govern Attention*—(a) Sustained attention involves strain and therefore results in fatigue—(b) The strain of sustained and voluntary attention is greater in the midst of distracting influences—(c) The effort of attention is easier when the brain is fresh—(d) The habit of attention can be deliberately cultivated—(e) Just as attention to what is helpful can be cultivated, so can inattention to what is hurtful or useless.

AN infant of a few days old lies awake in his cradle. His eyes are capable of receiving sensations of light and colour, his ears are prepared to receive sensations of sound, he is sensitive to touch and sensations of warmth, but he has as yet no power to distinguish between the impressions which he receives. His mental consciousness is due to one vague mass of undistinguished sensations, producing in him a vague feeling of general comfort or discomfort, and nothing more. None of his impressions are definite, he understands nothing. Memory



plays no part in his mental life. At this particular moment, he is feeling comfortable—cosily wrapped in his blankets, awakened from a refreshing sleep, and not yet conscious of hunger. But his meal time is approaching, and a vague sense of uneasiness is entering into and colouring the whole of his consciousness. This feeling of discomfort increases, until he begins to cry loudly and move his arms and legs energetically in his distress. Instinctively he calls for food, though he does not yet know that hunger is the cause of his misery. But Mother is close at hand. Some one stoops over him, vaguely modifying his mental consciousness by the action. He feels himself lifted up in strong, warm arms, receiving an impression of movement, which somehow gives him momentary comfort, he knows not why. He feels his head lying against something soft and warm. He smells a faint, sweet smell. In response to these vague impressions, he turns his head this way and that, instinctively seeking for relief. His mouth comes in contact with his mother's breast, and he sucks. A new impression of taste mingles with the vague mass of impressions already in consciousness, and a feeling of profound comfort steals over him. All movement is stilled. All cries cease. Absorbed in the process of feeding, motionless he lies, one tiny fist clasped close to his breast.

Such an experience is repeated for him at regular intervals day and night. Always the same order in the vague series of sense impressions, passively received and invariably registered on his brain,—comfort, which gradually changes into discomfort, which is in its turn instantaneously relieved, when a certain touch, a certain smell, a certain voice, enters into his dim field of consciousness.

Gradually, as one might expect, certain links in this wonderful chain of events begin to stand out with some degree of definiteness; certain of these sense impressions begin to be recognized. After a very few weeks of such repeated experiences, the hungry baby will cease his crying for a moment when he hears his mother's voice, showing in this way that he recognizes and associates the sound with the removal of his distress. If we hold him in our arms with his tiny face cuddled up close against ours, he will move his little head to and fro in the vain search for food, showing that he has further learnt to recognize



the feeling of warm flesh and to connect that too with the process of feeding.

The first few weeks of his infant life are made up almost wholly of similar groups of experiences, repeated in the same order and at the same time. He sleeps, he wakes, suffers hunger, is fed, sleeps again. The bath is prepared, he is lifted out of his cradle, undressed, washed, dressed and again put back to bed. He is taken up, dressed in outdoor garments, put into a perambulator, and, as he is wheeled along, he falls off again to sleep.

*Always these different series of sense impressions are registered in the cells of his brain ; at each repetition this register becomes, as it were, clearer and more permanent ; until the infant shows by his actions, though he has as yet no power of definite self-expression, that sensations, in steadily increasing numbers, are recognized, both in themselves and as links in familiar chains of experience, and that he therefore expects his life to be the same from day to day, and resents any arbitrary interference with the regular routine of events.* The sight of the bath, the sound of the flowing water, the sensation of being lifted, forms, for instance, one of such clearly recognized sequences, a sequence which probably arouses in him a feeling of gladness, associated with the dimly remembered joy of nakedness in front of the fire, of splashing in the warm water. The sight of the outdoor garments, the feeling of being lifted up at that particular time in the morning when he always goes out for his walk, is another of such remembered sequences ; and he shows pleasure or distress, when the sequence begins, according as the delight of being in the fresh air outweighs or does not outweigh, for him, the discomfort involved in being dressed ready to go. Memory is already beginning to play an important part in his mental life, some impressions are clear and definite, he begins to *know* some things.

But so far he has been a mere passive spectator of what went on around him, attending only to what definitely concerned himself. Some impressions, for instance, the bright gas-light, or the sound of music, he received with close attention ; they interested him even before he understood them. Some he attended to less closely, and these he remembers less vividly.

Even while he thus passively receives impressions, wonderful



discoveries are at hand, which serve, young as he is, to enlarge his mental horizon. When he is about three months old, as he lies in his cradle one day, moving arms and legs in that purposeless way which is Nature's method of providing him with the active exercise which he needs, his hand comes in contact with some tiny bells, which, to amuse him, Nurse has hung above him. He touches them and they move; swinging back and forth, and tinkling as they swing! He had seen Nurse move them before, he had laughed and crowed in his delight then—but now! In his excitement he works his arms vigorously; again he touches the bells, again they swing—and it slowly dawns upon him, though he could not so express it, that it is in his power to “play with” those bells! Every baby, in his turn, experiences just such a transport of delight the first time he learns by chance to “play”. Rejoicing in his newly discovered powers, Baby lies happily for hours pulling, shaking, moving whatever is within his reach. He has as yet no knowledge of distance, of weight, of matter, but he can now turn his new powers to account. He is no longer merely a passive spectator. He can actively explore the world around him, handling, biting, sucking, shaking, pulling at everything, and so gathering impressions which later he can contrast and compare, and by means of which he will learn. Now, at every turn, he comes upon some fresh experience. It was soothing to his gums to bite his indiarubber horse, pleasant to knock it against his face. Bobbie gives him a brick to play with; he sucks that, knocks with that, and the result is painful. He *knows* neither “horse” nor “brick”—but he has *experienced the contrasting sensations* to be got from “soft” things and “hard,” from things which are round and things which have sharp corners. In front of him he sees a bright red, wool ball, he stretches out his hand, and feels a soft something which he pulls towards his mouth and bites. Then something brighter still, the gas, catches his eye; out goes the tiny hand again, but in response to his movement, he feels nothing, there is nothing there which he can pull towards him! For the first time, maybe, he involuntarily compares the different impressions given by things which are “far off,” and which are “near by”. His hands clasp the bottle as he feeds, and for a moment he receives a pleasant sensation of warmth; he takes his hand off the bottle to catch at Nurse's watch,



which is ticking above him. A new and contrasting sensation—of cold—is experienced. He puts his toes, instead of the horse, into his mouth; in the one case, he experiences a double sensation in mouth and foot, in the other case, only a sensation in his mouth. What can this mean? He bites Nurse's finger, and enjoys it; he bites his own equally hard, and, to his surprise, feels a pain in his finger, which outbalances the pleasurable feeling in his gums! He pulls his toes towards him just as he was accustomed to pull at his rattle or his bottle—his toes seem to pull back against him as it were, but the rattle or the bottle he could easily raise to his mouth. He begins to learn that his own body is part of himself—that all else belongs to the world outside.

Gradually, in this way, by comparing his various experiences, he acquires ideas of things, their sizes and shapes, and, grouping them together, he begins to form some conception of the outer world and of the various "things" which he sees around him. His india-rubber horse, for instance, is one of those "things," a definite group of impressions of coldness, softness to bite, etc.; Nurse is another of those "things"—but very different from the horse. She moves, it remains still; her face changes, the horse is always the same, and so forth. As he compares different objects, he involuntarily puts them into general groups.

Such groups are at first inaccurate, for he is as yet only capable of appreciating a very general likeness. "Daddy," for instance, is seen by him as a simple "object" in garments of a certain shape, in voice, manner and appearance giving a certain general impression associated with manhood. Consequently, all men are grouped together under the general term of "Daddy". All four-footed animals are classed as "gee-gees" or "bow-wows". Gradually, with closer discrimination, these groups are broken up into smaller ones. A horse and a dog are now distinguished one from the other, but a sheep may be still confused with a dog, and a donkey with a horse.

The process of analysing and comparing is accelerated by the use of words on the part of the grown-up people around him. Words help him to put his otherwise vague conceptions into definite form. High, heavy, hard, large, etc., he associates with certain definite sensations; Nurse Bobby, Mother, bath, bottle, with certain groups of impressions clear in his mind.



It is hardly possible to overestimate the extent to which the child's mental growth, due in the first place to his own powers of observation, of retention, of discrimination and of comparison, is stimulated by the hearing and use of words. "*Now*, Baby, bath time," he hears Nurse say, and he is conscious of being lifted up *at once* and prepared for his bath. "Bottle time *now*, Baby," and again the bottle is *at once* at hand. He cries to be nursed, "*Not now*," he hears Nurse say, as she bends over him. He cries for more food when the bottle is empty. "*Not now*," he hears again, and he gets no more. "In a minute" or "Soon," and he has not long to wait for the satisfaction of his desires; but "*Not to-day*, Baby," has a far different meaning. Always these grown-ups use the same words to correspond with the same definite experiences; and ideas of time and space and matter begin to acquire a place and meaning in the child's mental life. So his knowledge of the material world grows and his mind expands.

But all this time his physical powers are developing; he can now talk and question, walk and climb. As the opportunities for mental growth possessed by one who never leaves the place of his birth are to those of one who travels from place to place; so are the baby's opportunities of learning before and after he can walk by himself. An infinitely larger world is now within his reach, which he is free to explore; but the process of adding to his knowledge is ever the same—observation, recollection, comparison.

And so the child-mind grows little by little. As he forms general ideas about the material world around him, through the gradual repetition and comparison of experiences, so he forms conclusions in other directions—on matters of right and wrong, on cause and effect. As he ceased to be merely a passive spectator of the material world, and by experimenting or exploring added to his increasing store of knowledge; so, in the mental and moral world, he soon ceases, or should cease, merely to accept other people's judgments. In matters of right and wrong, in matters of belief, with regard to causes and their results—he learns by imitation and experiments, and not merely by hearsay; and so enormously increases the range of his understanding.

Mental development cannot be fully explained by experi-



ence : there is an organic development upon which the mental development rests and without which the process would be impossible. This organic substratum varies enormously, and accounts for much of the diversity in the rate and nature of mental development. Yet the psychological process is always the same. However vast the sweep of a man's knowledge of the physical universe, however deep his insight into the moral forces at work—his knowledge and his insight began in childhood, and were acquired gradually, by a slow and unconscious sifting out of repeated experiences.

#### MAIN PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTS.

What are the main psychological facts underlying this mental growth?

(1) The child's mind, from the first, possesses a certain power of retention and of recall, which we speak of as memory. By this power impressions are registered and combined together more or less permanently in his mind. Every time an impression is received, some change occurs in the nerve-cells and fibres of the brain; it therefore follows that *the more frequently an impression is repeated, the more likely it is to be remembered, other things being equal.*

(2) Feeling is also closely associated with memory. If breast-fed, so that his Mother is in these early weeks the chief source of his delight, her voice, her face, etc., are recognized more quickly by the baby than anything else which he hears or sees. If bottle-fed, the sounds associated with the preparing of the bottle are more quickly recognized by him, and the voice and look of the one who habitually feeds him; that is, we find that, *although all impressions are retained to a greater or less extent, those memories are the most persistent, which are most closely associated with feeling.*

(3) Some impressions, e.g. those connected with feeding, bathing, etc., arouse interest in the child by themselves, whether pleasurable or painful—if the latter, he spontaneously turns from them to avoid them; if the former, he turns towards them in the, at first, unconscious effort to retain them. They arouse his intelligent interest, and he therefore attends to them without effort of will. To other things, we have to make him attend,



e.g. when we are training him to be clean and regular in his habits.

*Thus, interest is the connecting link between memory and attention. When he is not naturally interested, we want, whenever possible, by some means or other, to create an interest. For if he is interested, he pays more attention and attends with less effort, a deeper impression is made upon his memory, and his knowledge increases more rapidly.*

(4) What is Attention? Observe closely our own mental operations. We notice that, when we attend, the whole of our consciousness seems to be taken up with one thing, the rest is in the margin; and further, that the attention which we pay is of two kinds, voluntary and involuntary. *Voluntary attention is deliberate, and we are conscious of strain and effort. We are forced to attend voluntarily to objects which are less interesting, for the sake of something else. Involuntary attention is spontaneous and we are conscious of no such effort of will. Involuntary attention is the basis of the voluntary. Sustained and continuous attention is difficult,* whatever the subject matter, even for grown-up people, and demands considerable self-control. Much greater then must be the difficulty in childhood. Moreover, our minds tend to wander from the point, unless there is constant change in that to which we are attending, or in the point of view from which we are regarding it. To fix our attention persistently on one spot of light, for instance, is extremely difficult, but we can, with less difficulty, keep our attention on the flower we are dissecting, or the piece of architecture we are observing, because the range of attention is not too limited. It permits a certain range of movement, and so diminishes fatigue.

Let us suppose, in our own case, that we possess a total lack of interest in the subject to which we are called upon to attend, combined with a very great interest at the same time in other subjects; then, while such a state of things continues, sustained voluntary attention is practically impossible. We can only make repeated efforts to exclude from our minds those things which naturally interest us, thus giving the things which are as yet uninteresting a chance to stimulate our attention. Gradually, in all probability, the uninteresting subject will gain in interest, and the latter lose; until the effort to attend becomes less and less difficult. We tend to forget that many of the things to



which children are forced to attend are, for them, wholly lacking in interest, while the world of life outside, or the world of their own imaginings, is all absorbing.

#### PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTS.

What is the bearing of these elementary principles of psychology on our method of dealing with the children?

1. *Laws which Govern Memory.*—Neville learns his dates or his multiplication table by constant repetition, until the more or less uninteresting details are firmly impressed upon his mind. Yet every day, and at every meal, repeatedly we have to tell him to keep his arms off the table, and he always forgets! Where is the difference?

Memory is, as I have said, improved by repetition, but only when other things are equal; and in daily life, we forget that other things are *not* equal. If Neville paid as little attention to the repetition of his dates as to the details of his behaviour at meals, then they would never be learnt. Interest and attention must be combined with the process of repetition; the child must put himself into whatever he is doing, and not merely listen or repeat mechanically.

How can we make use of this psychological fact? Instead of constantly telling Neville to put his arms down and nothing more, suppose we drill him in the right action! "Arms on the table, arms off!"—"On, off—on, off"—briskly, six times, while he suits the action to the words, and gives for the time his whole attention to the arm exercises. Then, reminding him that if he forgets again he will suffer some slight punishment to meet the case, we make repetition effective because no longer mechanical. It is *mere* repetition which dulls the interest and leads to inattention, so that the impression hardly enters into consciousness—attention must be paid all the time, interest kept up. *The more frequently an impression is repeated, the more firmly is it registered in the memory, provided interest has been felt and attention has been paid.*

2. *Laws which Govern Interest.*—The time has come when Norman should learn to dress himself; but the task is difficult and uninteresting. The buttons will *not* go through the holes; every now and again, just when they seem as if they are



really through, out they slip again; and his fingers grow weary and he himself is tired of attending. The task is so dull and the effort so great! What is the good after all of his struggling with the buttons when Nurse can do them so easily? She can do them up in a minute without stopping to think; he has to fix his attention on them ever so hard and for ever so long. Why should he care to do it for himself? It is this lack of interest, in addition to the difficulty of manipulation, which makes the task hard. If only it could be made interesting, what a different matter it would be! Can he be made interested in the doing of it, at any rate until the first hard process of learning has been attended to or mastered? Is there any method by which fresh interests can be created? This is the question which we need to answer.

One day I take a visitor into the nursery to see the children. One and all are happily occupied, and, when we first come in, hardly notice us. Malcolm is absorbed in his building. Their special occupations are in the "focus" of their consciousness, and our presence arouses no interest. But we stand there, quietly watching, and gradually we become an element in the margin of their minds.

Norman and Janet, though interested in their game, are naturally curious, so that anything fresh straying into their field of consciousness tends quickly to become an object of special interest. Their game becomes less interesting, the visitor more so. Who is she? they wonder. Is she fond of children? Is she going to stay for a while in the nursery? They question her—Can she tell stories? They love to listen. Down she sits, with the children on either side, and begins her tale. But all this time, Malcolm has never once looked up from his building. He is interested in that alone. An imaginative, strong-willed, keen little lad, he puts his whole energy into whatever he may be doing, resenting any interference or even suggestions from without, asking for no help. He is so keenly interested in whatever he may be doing that all else for the time is uninteresting in comparison. Hoping to create a fresh interest in Malcolm, the visitor weaves his building into the plot of her story. "In just such a castle as Malcolm is building over there," she begins, in an audible voice,—and the sound of his name enters into Malcolm's margin of consciousness. In his corner, he can



half hear the story as it progresses, and the thoughts of what happened in the castle become gradually more interesting than even the building of the castle itself. He listens and ceases to build; then he too, interested at last, quietly slips into his place by the visitor's side. She has found a way to arouse a fresh interest in him. Because he was keen on his castle, he was ready to be keen over this story about his castle. *By working on the lines of his old interest, a new interest has been created.*

Norman had made up his mind to be a soldier when he grew up, he was never tired of hearing about soldiers and war, and to this concrete ideal in him we are able to appeal. Soldiers in camp do everything for themselves—let him fancy himself a soldier preparing for drill as he dresses in the morning. Or Father may be his ideal of manhood; and he struggles with his buttons because, if he cannot learn to dress himself, he can never go to business like Father.

Roy would sit for hours listening if Nurse or Mother would tell him his favourite stories; but they are busy and cannot often spare the time. The drudgery of learning to read ceases to be drudgery for him when he realizes that, if only he works persistently every day, he makes constant progress, so that before long he will be able to read for himself.

Arthur naturally finds Arithmetic dull and hard, but at School he is reading about the discovery of America by Columbus. His spirit of adventure is fired, and he feels as if he were on that boat with Columbus, looking out for new land. Food is becoming scarce, land is not yet in sight! Problems arise: Their supply of food is dwindling. They have now only 10 lb. of meat, twelve loaves of bread weighing 3 lb. each, etc.; the crew consists of six men; how long will the food last them if each man requires a minimum of 50 oz. daily? Accurate calculation becomes a matter of absorbing interest; the lives of the crew depend upon it! Arithmetic dull! why, how could Arthur do without it?

In principle, our method of arousing interest is ever the same. *We can get the child to take an interest in things which are naturally uninteresting by making use of those interests which he already possesses.* We must watch the children, find out their natural interests, and use these to help them to acquire others. Unless they are interested, they do not do their best; what they



are interested in, they strive with all their might to accomplish. We forget the need of initial stimulus in matters which were hard to us once, but which have long ago become automatic.

3. *Laws which Govern Attention.*—Jessie has been to the pantomime for the first time. Not once did she take her eyes off the stage, she hardly moved a muscle while the curtain was up, nothing escaped her attention, and the afternoon was one of intense enjoyment.

What a treat her aunt had given her! But even on the way home, she was inclined to be irritable, when the tram kept on stopping; at tea, she quarrelled with the other children; when bed-time came, she cried and did not want to go. "You are ungrateful, Miss Jessie," Nurse breaks out exasperated; "I should think your aunt would never want to take *you* out again, behaving like this when you come home. You don't deserve to have treats." Nurse does not understand. It is just because Jessie has appreciated the afternoon so much, that she is "naughty" when the treat is at an end. *Both interest and concentration of attention mean strain*; a strain necessarily followed by a reaction. We must bear with her; protect her from the clamour of the other little ones, get her quickly to bed, where she can enjoy her tea in the quiet that she needs. Just as we should be physically exhausted after walking twenty miles, so Jessie is mentally exhausted after her "treat," and the mental exhaustion reacts upon the body.

Each night Robert has a few home lessons to do. They need not take him long, but he dawdles over them. Insisting that working in the same room with other people makes no difference to him, he starts his Latin exercise in the dining-room where all are sitting. He has just begun, "Balbus is building the wall," when his sister Margaret comes in to ask if she can accept an invitation out to tea on Saturday. Even though Balbus was occupied so busily in the "focus" of his mind, Margaret's words stray into the margin and then usurp the focus; Balbus is turned out, while Robert asks if he can have some one in to tea with him, since Margaret is going out. "Yes, but get on with your work, lad," says Mother; and he bends once more to his task. But his power of voluntary attention is not yet strong, he is easily distracted. One thing



after another interrupts him. At last his lessons are done, but in all probability they are badly done, and he has taken a long while over them—all because of this difficulty of concentration on less interesting things in the midst of things which are more interesting.

*When anything has to be done which calls for a sustained effort of attention, we must lessen the temptations which would cause the child's mind to wander.* Enforced silence or solitude; allowing a certain time for a definite piece of work; insisting that work half-done must be done again—make it not only worth while, but easier, to attend.

Ellis and Mary have texts to learn every week-end; they think of them on Sunday afternoons and set to work, but they find them so difficult to commit to memory; it is not like learning poetry, where the rhyme and rhythm help. Their brains are not quite fresh; it is hard to concentrate their attention in the afternoon, when their energies have been more or less dissipated throughout the day; and before the texts are known, they feel disgusted with themselves and out of love with the beautiful words. Another plan is tried. Texts are to be learnt in bed before getting up in the morning, and said before breakfast. Brains are then fresh, distractions are then nil, it is therefore easier to attend and the difficulty is at an end.

*Concentration is an effort and the habit of concentration is only gradually formed. While the habit is growing, times and places must be set apart for work and obstacles to concentration removed.* The habits of tidying away all toys and occupations, and reading for a quiet half-hour before bed-time; of reading in silence for a short time daily after dinner; of working always in solitude or in silence; of studying as far as possible only when the brain is fresh—all help to form, in childhood, habits which will be invaluable in later life. Concentration of attention is by no means an easy matter; it requires deliberate cultivation.

*Inattention.*—Concentration of attention in one direction implies inattention in other directions; and the capacity for deliberate inattention to certain things is equally important with the capacity for attention, and equally capable of cultivation.

A cricket match has been planned for Saturday, and the day turns out wet. Complaining will not make the sun shine,



neither will it reconcile the children to their loss. The only thing for them to do is to make up their minds that the match is "off," plan something else in its stead, and thereby cease to "attend" to the disappointment.

A visit to the dentist has been arranged; does it make it any easier to face the ordeal by thinking about it for hours beforehand? Something else must be put in the focus of consciousness, and there will be room, in the merest margin only, for thoughts of dentistry.

Molly falls and bruises her head, with the result that she has a headache. Is the ache more easily borne by talking about it? If it is bad, surely bed is the best place for her; if it is bearable, then it is best to try to forget it; constantly referring to the matter only makes her more conscious of it.

If a fault has been committed and the child is full of remorse, is any good done, even in this case, by prolonged dwelling upon the wrong-doing? It is enough that he is sorry, that he has braced himself up with the determination next time to do differently. To hug his misery is weakening for himself and miserable for other people. Except inasmuch as attention to his fault prevents its recurrence, such attention is morbid.

*The habit of dwelling upon the blessings and not the troubles of life, of seeing the silver lining and not the dark cloud of disappointments, of rejoicing in the strength rather than complaining of the weakness of our comrades—can be deliberately developed in childhood.* If we begin early enough and try hard enough, we have more power of control over our thoughts than we realize; with constant practice, we can become masters in the art of attending, allowing in the focus of our minds only what makes for growth and for true happiness, deliberately thrusting into the farthest margin all that hinders.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GROWTH OF IMAGINATION.

First stage of imagination, the power to "image"—Increased accuracy of knowledge due to comparison between what is seen and what is remembered.

Second stage, the power to combine mental pictures according to direction—Enjoyment of pictures and games.

Third stage, such mental pictures *freely* combined—Invention of games and stories—"Romancing," confusion between real and imaginary experiences.

Effect of emotion on imagination—Play-acting—Connexion between imagination and want of straightforwardness—Children's fears—Imagination enriches the commonplace—Children's toys—Practical difficulties to be faced in dealing with highly-imaginative children:—

- (1) That "play-acting" and dreaming often take the place of doing.
  - (2) That they often get into the habit of beginning, and not finishing
- Our attitude towards the children in such matters.

WE have already seen in the last chapter the way in which the child, by observation and comparison, gradually gained an increasing knowledge of the material world around him, a knowledge proven to us and growing more quickly in him, through the use of words. Such knowledge was not scientific, the child had no power of critical analysis, he merely compared all unconsciously the impressions which he received. To begin with, all men were classed under the one term "Daddy"—all four-legged creatures were "bow-wows," long-necked animals "gee-gees," triangular-shaped objects "ships".<sup>1</sup> Certain special features in the father, the dog, the horse or the ship struck the small child's attention, and for him, outweighing in importance all other features, were seen for a time alone, the determining characteristic of the whole group.

<sup>1</sup> For an interesting record of the growth of knowledge in this way see Sully, "Studies of Childhood. Extracts from a Father's Diary."



But each day, his power of discrimination was growing. His Father, he discovered, had a special connexion with himself which these other once-called "Daddies" did not have. Father lived with him, romped with him, had a voice, an appearance, which was always the same, he alone was "Daddy," the rest became "men". But not yet was his grouping accurate. If "Daddy" was young and clean-shaven, the more general term "man" served to describe all other young and clean-shaven men, but a long beard made a marked difference; he could not permit the owner of a beard to belong to this same group. One old bearded man only he knew well—his Grandfather—all the grey beards were classed with him, they were "grandfathers". This successive modification of groups with the growth of knowledge, implied a process of comparison between what was seen at the moment and what was remembered as having been seen previously. This fragment of memory was the basis of his judgment. Ronald, 18 months old, is wheeled past the end of the road where, a few days before, he had seen a steam-roller at work. Gleefully he cries: "Nurse, Nurse, 'teemer down dat road!" A picture of the steam roller was in his mind. At the same age he sees the dog panting after a run; "Dat bow-wow like puff-puff," he cries, implying a mental picture of a train. "Dat ship go Margery-Daw," is his remark, as he watches, for the first time, a real ship sailing with a rocking movement, showing a distinct memory of the nursery game "See-saw, Margery Daw".

Such grouping of experiences, such comparisons, would be impossible, unless, as the result of his experience, the child possessed already clear and definite recollections of what he had seen. He is now able to picture, with his mind's eye, certain definite objects with which he is familiar, though he cannot as yet follow a story which connects them together. When we show him a picture-book or sing nursery rhymes, the tale means nothing to him, but he rejoices in the forming of images for their own sake.

We turn over the pages of the book—there are the children at the railway station on their way to the seaside, porters crowding around with the luggage, fathers and mothers buying tickets, every one eager. There they are in the train, waving a last good-bye from the window. Now they are by the sea, busy



with buckets and spades; some are riding on donkeys, some paddling. Baby is not interested in, is not yet capable of following, the sequence of the tale; he cares only for the individual objects. "Man," "bow-wow," "box," "puff-puff," "gee-gee," eagerly the mite cries, pointing to the objects in the successive pictures which strike his eye. A train picture-book was given to Eric, when he was 2 years old. He opened it at the first page, saw an engine, and, with a glad cry of recognition, puff-puffed hard around the nursery! He turned to the next page, another engine! again he joyously carried the thought into action. The child is capable of forming mental pictures so clearly and definitely that he enjoys them as if they were real. Imagination has begun to influence his mental growth, but only to this extent. Thought is disconnected, thought is concrete. He can neither combine, nor follow a combination of, mental pictures. Abstract and general terms are as yet meaningless to him.

But the power of combining these mental pictures soon follows. When N. was nearly  $2\frac{1}{2}$ , he was playing with his sister, and she, recalling a recent visit to the seaside, went to the other end of the room, telling him that she was going far away on the beach. He whispered something and crept under the table. "N. go away from T., away on the beach," she heard him say, over and over again, his little voice gradually growing tremulous, until he burst into tears. With his mind's eye, he may have seen, not merely the definite mental picture of the beach, the sea, or N. or T, with spades—but the connected whole—T. leaving N., then daring N: going even farther away from T., until, overwhelmed with grief at the thought of the loneliness he had brought upon himself, he wept! Norman, a little older, used to play at "soldiers on the battle-field" with Frank and Janet—but at the first wound which Frank received from the enemy, he was reduced to tears. He could not even pretend to stay at home with the soldiers' mother, while the others went to war; his power of imagination and his sympathies were too keen, he was able to follow too vividly the course of events.

By the time, then, that the child is  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -3 years old, he is likely to have entered on the second stage in the development of his imagination. He has the power, not merely to form-dis-



inct images or mental pictures of objects, but to combine them into a connected whole, a definite piece of experience. A story can be followed, remembered instructions can be understood and carried out, a game can be played, the child can respond to suggestions of "make believe". He does not yet originate to any extent; but he can enter into and follow the free creative thought of other people; and all is intensely real.

This power of connecting thoughts, or of understanding the connexion of things and events leads him to inquire into the causes and origins of what he sees around him. "What for?" "Why?" "Who made?"—are constantly upon his lips; but the only "causes" which he can understand must be concrete and visible, all his knowledge is still in the form of clear and definite images, what is abstract and general is still beyond his comprehension.

Our general conceptions of space, of light and darkness, etc., are many of them at this time unreal to the child, who can as yet only conceive of what he can see or touch and handle. Our very use of language may suggest or intensify his fears. We talk, for instance, of "the dark" or "the darkness," urging that brave children are not afraid of "the dark". What is "the dark"? the child questions, though he dare not put his thought into words, and as nobody ever tells him, he sometimes thinks of "the dark" as a kind of bogey or spirit that might hurt him. So full himself of life and feeling, absence of life or feeling is unthinkable to him. An imaginative child projects his own feelings, his own experiences into much which he sees in the world around him. Where no life is visible, life may nevertheless be; and the material world may be peopled with gnomes and sprites and fairies, and sometimes too with dark and dimly conceived and horrible forms.

This second stage in the development of imagination is quickly merged in the third stage, in which these mental pictures are combined freely and not only according to outside direction. Many children now begin to live in a land of their own imaginings, sometimes confused by them with the world of concrete experiences. Their memory images are so strong and clear at this time that they actually confuse the real with the imaginary, belief and play-belief are imperfectly differentiated. To us unimaginative up-grown people they seem at times to be



untruthful, when in their so-called "romances" they are only describing what is true to their imaginary experience.

Lucy, 5 years old, used to tell of wonderful journeys by train in the early mornings. She could describe all the details of the people she met, or of the things she saw from the carriage window. Later, when her travels ceased, in her imaginings a little baby came to her home—for which she was often responsible. She loved to tell of this baby's doings to sympathetic listeners, he was her first consideration, and seemed as real to her as any first-born to his mother. Going to town one day with her schoolmates, she suddenly realized that she could not travel in the tram with the others, because of the baby she was wheeling; but some one, luckily, was ready with a suggestion. She happily fastened the perambulator to the back of the tram-car where the conductor could keep an eye upon the baby! Mr. Canton's little girl in his book "The Invisible Playmate" lived the most real part of her life caring for a tiny baby. Another only child, about the same age, had an unfailing friend in "Suchard," happily named after the chocolates he so much enjoyed! Imagination steps in and cares for the lonely children.

But not to all children is this vivid power of imagining granted—sometimes the world is only peopled with "fancy" forms under the stress of emotional excitement. A game started in play may end in reality, sprites and fairies invisible in the town may become visible under the stimulus of beautiful country.

Cuthbert, aged 5, had planned a game of "hunters". He and his sister Meg, with imaginary bows and arrows, were shooting in the darkened passage, and gathering their prey, which consisted of ancient garments out of the children's "dressing-up" box. Suddenly the boy ran to his Mother, his face pale—"Mother," he cried, "there *is* something flying about the passage really; there wasn't at first, but there is now!" Under the stimulus of excitement, strange birds of prey had been created by his imagination, though in many ways he was a matter-of-fact little person and despised fairies as "unreal" and "babyish". A year later, he was staying with friends, and a day was spent in the woods at Hawarden. On his return home, his Mother went to meet him. "I have seen the fairies," were his first eager words, "I *do* believe in them now; I saw them



at the foot of a mossy tree in the woods," and he proceeded to tell her all about it. "Visions seen on the mount," are treasured on the plain; the intense reality of a child's imaginings at such times lasts on, making such fancies real even after the emotional stimulus has died away. Fairies were now part of Cuthbert's more commonplace life—they danced in the sunbeam's rays and on happy, smiling faces, lived in the books he loved, and even crept from the loaf on the table and sat on the edge of his mug of milk!

At this age, children, even when they do not live in a fancy-created world, are full of such vivid imaginings, and possess such resource in combining them, that they weave "stories" and play "plays" all the time. Aurore (George Sand), shut within four chairs to keep her from playing with the fire, used to pull out the straws with her hands, as she composed long and wonderful tales; her make-believe was intensely real to her.

"One evening at dusk, she and her cousin were playing at chasing one another from tree to tree, for which the bed curtains did duty. The room had disappeared for these little day-dreamers, they were in a lonely country at the oncoming of night, and when they were called to dinner, they heard nothing. Aurore's mother had finally to carry her to the table and she could ever after recall the astonishment she felt on seeing the light, the table, and other real objects around her!"<sup>1</sup>

Caroline, 8 years old, "spent her golden times" under an old beech-tree at the foot of the garden, where, in dainty shells, she made sand pies for the fairies. This tree was one of her most real companions. At any time she could talk to "him," and explain anything about the schoolroom which had been particularly tiresome, and "he just rustled and sighed," and the child was again in Fairyland, the schoolroom quite forgotten.

In quiet fancies enjoyed all alone, and in games shared with one another, life is the richer for the children's power of imagination. In games, there is no limit to their originality. Conscious of no irreverence, Arthur, aged 5, "played" at being God. Mounted on the nursery table, as on Mount Olympus, with all the toys piled beside him, he dispensed his benefits with a bounteous hand. "Joyce, God loves you, He

<sup>1</sup>"Studies of Childhood," p. 494.



sends you a present of this book."—"Caroline, God sees that you try hard to be good, He is giving you this doll."—Gratefully and reverently his juniors received the gifts, and not till all had been given, did "God" descend to earth to plan some fresh play of his imagination!

This faculty of ready combination of "images," or "mental pictures," may not only be used in the play of fancy, but in connexion with actual events. The child is then able to foresee rapidly the consequences of his actions, and this often tempts an imaginative child into the doing of actions which are not altogether straightforward, or into the telling of deliberate untruths. These need to be carefully distinguished from the "romances" of the child, who confuses what he actually sees with what he so vividly imagines.

For instance, when Leonard wanted for himself a toy with which Eva was playing, he used to plan a game of "shop". After two or three sham moves in the form of bargaining, he would end by "buying" from Eva the toy which he specially desired to possess, then diplomatically bringing that game to a close, he himself was able to play with the coveted toy!

Dick was only 3 years old. As a great treat, he was allowed some red currants for tea, these he wanted to eat alone instead of with his bread and butter. One "finger" after another of his bread was eaten under compulsion, till only one small crust remained—a crust which he was obliged to finish before he had had more currants. Mother was looking the other way! Dick slipped off his chair with the crust, ran to the window, which opened out on the garden, and threw it out. "Muvver," tenderly murmured the little sinner as he climbed back into his chair, "poor 'iccle dickies have no bread and butter, kind Dick give 'iccle dickies a bit of his bread, Dick so solly for poor 'iccle birds.—Bread and butter all gone, Muvver!" he added in a bright voice, "now give Dick some more 'iccle gwapes!"

Joan's quick intellectual imagination enabled her on every occasion to find excuses for wrong doing. She was 4½ years old, and on coming in from her morning walk, had thoughtlessly taken off her dainty bonnet and thrown it on the floor. Nurse had definitely told her that she was not to take her bonnet off herself; but Nurse was not in the room at the time, only her mother, who was busy working. The bonnet was no sooner



off than Joan heard Nurse's step as she passed the door. Swiftly her imagination planned the best course to pursue. She ran to her mother, asking for the bonnet to be put on again. "No, dearie, you don't need to wear it indoors," was the natural rejoinder; and like an arrow from a bow, Joan was out of the room to tell Nurse the news, implying that Mother had herself taken it off, since bonnets were not worn in the house! "When I was younger," said Donald, a 10-year-old philosopher, in a retrospective mood, "I think I told the truth without thinking about it, but when I got a bit older and knew what wrong was and how people felt about it, then when I had done anything I ought not to have done, I could see at once in my mind all that would happen, and I was tempted to lie." With a sensitive child, imagination for a time makes honesty harder.

But this vivid power of imagination is not always a source of joy; it is often accompanied in early childhood by excessive timidity. In such case, the element of emotion (fear) so intensifies an idea that it becomes a temporary delusion. Norman, aged 5, was playing in the garden and had scratched his finger with a piece of sword-grass. Screaming with terror, he declared that he could see the blood pouring down, though not a mark of injury was visible to any eye but his!

Nora, aged 6, had swallowed a plum stone and feared a speedy death. Drinks, food, arguments were of no avail, hours afterwards she could still feel the stone where it had, she declared, stuck in her throat. She was given a small peppermint to swallow, on the understanding that there was no room in the narrow passage for both peppermint and stone; the peppermint swallowed would push the stone down before it, and all would be well! In good faith, Nora swallowed the sweet; in imagination, she watched its passage down the "red lane," saw it push the stone onwards, all sensation of a plum stone in her throat disappeared, and the prospect of a long life was hers once more!

Austen, aged 7, declared that he felt nervous when his bedroom door was closed at night. He didn't know why, "things might come". "What things?" his Mother asked. "Well, a bear," was his reply. "Bears don't come here in England," she said, "besides if a bear came, you could soon manage him with your new lacrosse," which he was very proud of and



regarded as a formidable weapon! "I know the bears won't really come," the laddie urged, "it's the suffragettes I am afraid of. They might throw a bomb, and my lacrosse would be of no help to me then!"

When Edward was a little chap, there was a saw-mill close by his home. He loved to go there and watch the machinery at work. The men, to keep him away, told him that a big bogey, Jerry by name, would get him if he came near. But such was his curiosity that even Jerry could not deter him. One day he crept right inside to watch. Suddenly the trap-door above him opened, and he saw a head with horns and a kind of sheepskin covering. In his terror he tried to run, but could not move; the creature dragged him back. He fell and, leaving the sheepskin covering on top of him, Jerry escaped through the door. Such an experience would have frightened any child at the time, but, as Edward was an imaginative child, it was years before the boy recovered from the shock. Probably the trick was played as a joke; but what we say in the hearing of imaginative children, what we do to punish them for wrongdoing, what they read in their books, has an effect deeper and more lasting than we dream of. Physical health, freedom from excitement and from fear, long hours of rest, good and wholesome stories and beautiful pictures, matter more to the child of vivid imagining than to one less impressionable.

The imaginative child has difficulties to face from which his less imaginative brother and sister are saved; but he has untold advantages over them. For him the commonplace does not exist, life is full of joy and wonder and beauty; books and friends mean more to him, he is never at a loss for something to do, whether merely playing a game, or working and planning in imagination; he looks ahead, and the ideals, which he fancies he can one day realize, lift his life all the time to a higher level.

Children nowadays are spoilt, and their imagination allowed to weaken from disuse, through the superabundance of elaborate toys with which grown-up people provide them. "I've got nothing to play with," murmured little Margaret, for whom one fresh toy after another had been bought; "I want a doll's house with a real staircase and electric light and electric bells!"

What shop doll with its flaxen curls can really be compared with a wooden doll, which by the imaginative child can be



treated either as a boy or a girl, as baby, or grown princess? What can take the place of a table, which serves equally for a pirate ship, for merchant vessel, for coach or for dwelling-house?

"The sweetest craft that slips her moorings on the Round Pond, is what is called a stick boat," writes Barrie, "because she is rather like a stick, until she is in the water and you are holding the string. Then as you walk round pulling her, you see little men running about her deck, sails rise magically and catch the breeze, you put in on dirty nights at snug harbours which are unknown to lordly yachts. Night passes in a twink and again your rakish craft noses for the wind, whales spout, you glide over buried cities, and have brushes with pirates, and cast anchor on coral isles. . . . You always want to have a yacht . . . in the end your uncle gives you one . . . but soon you like to leave it at home. . . . Those yachts have nothing in their holds. It is the stick-boat that is freighted with memories. *The yachts are (merely) toys.*"

Our modern toys leave no room for imagination, and the child who, in his instinct to create and modify, destroys them in the process, is to be understood and sympathized with rather than blamed. Raw material for toys or games is what the children need, before their imagination is crushed out of them by a life too literal, too exacting and too prosaic, or spoilt by a superabundance of possessions. The wooden dolls are the best, which will stand wear and tear, and are loved for their own sakes, and not their golden curls; better than an elaborate ready-made grocer's shop is a wooden box for the shop, some bricks for counter and chairs, and a few odd treasures from the kitchen for stock.

Robert, on a wet day, can plan a delightful game with nothing but a piece of tape and a marble. For Molly, a row of ninepins forms a class of obedient and teachable scholars. The toys the children want are those with which they can create—soldiers, who can conduct manœuvres and fight to the death among the hills "in the land of counterpane"—bricks, with which the children can build houses, forts, railway stations, and bridges—odd pieces of stuff, to furnish houses, to dress up in, to sell as merchants—furniture which will stand rough usage. If we give the children the material, their imagination will supply the rest; and they can live at will on the wild prairies of the West, in the



heart of the busy city, on sea or on land, a life of adventure or one of domestic peace.

The imaginative child, if in good health, is rarely at a loss to know what to do: in play early in life, later in purposeful action, he is full of resource. Too full at times he seems to us conventional adults, and we are tempted to wish that, for a few moments, the child would enjoy reading a book quietly, or even looking out of the window and doing nothing! But such children must ever be creative, except when they are asleep; merely to absorb is too dull a task for them. They worry themselves, and worry us, trying to carry out ideas for the most part beyond their powers, but all the time they are learning.

It is holiday time. Harold and Donald start tooling in the playroom, bent on making a cradle out of a wooden box for Madge's birthday. They can see that cradle in their mind's eye! How grand it will be! They decide to save up one shilling between them to buy copper wire to make a spring mattress, perhaps Mother will give the material to make the stuff mattress and the bedding! Then, if they make a beautiful cradle, maybe Mother will buy a doll to go in it. They thrill with excitement. With saw and nails they work away, but, as they work, the fact, alas! is gradually borne in upon them that it will take them a long time to save up that shilling. Such a consideration serves for the time to damp their ardour, and they leave the cradle and go into the garden, to complete an "aviary" begun the day before. Harold is only 9, and Donald 7, but it is the very fact of their youth which gives them such confidence in their own powers. They hammer the loose planks together; a rod five feet high is needed for the side of the "aviary" door. Mother is called in to help to provide it. The nails are all used up; again Mother is in request to provide more nails. For a time, the great work progresses quietly. But fresh raw material—a pail with some whitewash—leads to fresh ideas. Why not whitewash the portion already built, and get some idea as to how the aviary will look when finished? When the children are called in to tea, Donald has by mistake sat in the whitewash, Harold is bespattered from head to foot! A typical day in the holidays of a family of imaginative children!

If free scope is to be allowed to the children's imagination, the sooner they learn to be careful and to tidy up, to consider



the rights of others equally with the carrying out of their own ideas, the better for every one.

But is it well, even at this early age, to permit such free scope? Or is it better to limit the children's creative activities and encourage them to do only what it is within their power to do? Should they find out for themselves through failure the limits of their capability? Or should we insist, in play at home, as we do in work at school, that what they begin to do, they must have the power to bring to completion?

It happened that the aviary, which Harold and Donald strove to build, occupied them on and off throughout the whole of the holidays, that they were not merely kept busy in the building, but learnt much in the way of handicraft, even though, in the form of an aviary, it was never brought to completion. But what if, like the cradle, the aviary had been quickly abandoned, and something else, equally beyond their powers of workmanship, begun, to be as promptly given up? If their self-imposed tasks frequently proved too hard for them, if the difficulties they were required to face were unconquerable, might they not get into the way of *shirking* their difficulties, instead of pegging away at them until they were overcome?

This is a question we need to ask ourselves when we allow the children to give full rein to their imaginations. But it is not only in connexion with their handicraft, but in connexion also with the exercise of their imagination in "play-acting," that difficulties arise. Is it good that we should encourage the children to become in turn princes and peasants, lords and slaves? Are they, through the weaving of tales, through acting and "make-believe," really brought into touch with a wider sphere of life? Are their sympathies enlarged as they personate in turn the coal-heaver or the engine-driver, the soldier or the hospital nurse? Or is it after all "merely play," and if their "real" lives are out of harmony with their "play" life, is this desirable? The boy personates the gallant knight in his rescue of the distressed damsel and, as he acts, he experiences a glow of chivalrous feeling. As he, like Horatius of old, defends the bridge, dauntless courage for the time fires his breast. But, the next moment, he may be treating his sister in a manner anything but chivalrous, or, suffering some slight hurt, he may, unlike brave Horatius, go whimpering to



bed! Will not such a divorce between his imaginary and his real life make for moral weakness rather than strength?

There *is* a danger, and it is well that we should recognize the fact, that the imaginative child, full of ideas too difficult for realization, may get into the habit of dreaming rather than doing, of promising rather than performing. There *is* a danger that the child, who is always "acting" great deeds, may rest content with thrills of emotion in his world of make-believe, which are not brought to the test in real life. Of such dangers we need to be fully aware.

But as the child who once "romanced," gradually, without any direct interference on our part, learnt the difference between real and imaginary, the necessity for accurate observation and truth telling in the "real" world, so the child, who strives beyond his powers, gradually learns by experience what he can and what he cannot do. We must see to it that, in those details of his life which are our especial concern, in his physical habits, in the care of clothes and books, in his small household duties, and in his work at school, he learns to *finish and to finish well*. In such matters, we must insist on punctuality, neatness, adherence to spoken word, thoroughness in what is below and not only upon the surface; and he will acquire, through such a training, a standard of action which will imperceptibly affect the carrying out of his own ideas equally with the behests of others.

We do not need then, in these early years, to check him in his desire to begin that which we know it must be beyond his power to finish, lest, as he grows older, he should become careless in the completion of his work, for, all the time, he is learning, though indirectly, that to finish any task to the best of his ability is his bounden duty. It is surely better that he should so learn. His independence of thought, his longing to create, his self-confidence, are not suffering by constant checks in those early years when he cannot understand the limits of his own capacity; he is able to gain a high standard of work, but without loss of originality and initiative.

Our attitude towards him should surely be the same in the world of play. We do not need to check his expression of feeling in "play-acting," but to see that the good impulses "made believe" to be his in play should also be striven for in real life.



The child gets accustomed to this attitude of mind, and feels that he is somehow false to himself, if he does not at any rate try to live up to the ideal which, in his games, he so vividly realizes.

Dougald was only 6. One morning, when he awoke, his face shone with a glad light. "I saw a fairy," he said, "inside one of the primroses on the mantelpiece yesterday, and she sent me a beautiful dream, and I am so happy! I dreamt that the king sent for me, and said the soldiers favoured me, and wanted me to lead the army, and they would take care of me. And so I went in a fairy carriage, and I led them to the battle, and I was a bit hurt, and the king, who was looking out of a window, saw me hurt, and he teared off to the hospital, and brought a thing to carry me in, and in the hospital the king himself read to me, and the soldiers made me cups of tea and things, and I soon got better, and the soldiers asked me to be their General always, and I was. And I got lots of medals just like Lord Roberts, and you were all so proud of me, and I am so happy with such a beautiful dream—and I want," he added, for he knew he was timid and not like a soldier by nature, "to do things now, while I'm little, to make the dream able to come true when I grow big."

It may seem a small thing to us, but it was not small to Dougald, that the practical outcome of his dream was a renewed effort to face strange dogs in the street and bear tumbles bravely, to earn a soldier's "bravery marks" on a chart fixed up on the nursery wall. If emotion is allowed to run to waste in the realm of imagination, not strength of feeling, but sentimentalism is the result. Emotion must needs be trained to bear fruit in definite acts of morality.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE LAW OF HABIT.

Tendencies quickly become habits—The law of habit—Importance of formation of right habits in childhood—Our active interference in the matter essential—Why?—Two methods of forming habits: (1) by reward and punishment; (2) by cultivating the child's natural impulses which tend in the right direction—Advantages of the latter method—Character is developed, and not merely habits formed—Psychology of habits—Danger of allowing exceptions—Gain in beginning early—Need, not merely to exhort the child towards right habits, but to insist upon habitual right action—Difference between good behaviour and good conduct.

FROM our earliest years, habit constitutes a large part of our behaviour. By the time a child is 5 or 6, probably three-fourths of all his actions are the result of habits already gained. We rouse him in the morning and, according to his wont, he either cuddles down closer under the bed-clothes, gets up briskly and happily, or crawls out and begins to dress with a "camel-ious hump" and a "yarly-snarly voice". Once out, he is either quickly dressed and ready for breakfast, or, talking instead of doing, dawdling over his duties, he arrives down late as usual. His manners at breakfast, his promptness in getting ready for his lessons or his walk, his behaviour to his parents or his nurse, his manner of greeting strangers in the street, his obedience or disobedience to those in authority over him, his way of handling books and toys—all this, and more, is the result of the habits he has formed up to that time. He is not intentionally ill-mannered or well-mannered, slack or prompt, careless or careful; for the most part, he acts wrongly or rightly unconsciously, because he has been allowed to act wrongly, or encouraged to act rightly. Even those actions which are the expression of the natural impulses in his character, which he in-



herited as a birthright, have become largely modified by this Law of Habit.

If, for instance, he was, as a baby, naturally passionate, such passion, if unchecked and constantly indulged, has now grown habitual; if he was naturally unselfish, opportunities for the exercise of this good quality have so frequently offered themselves, that the impulse to do for, or give to, others, has by now become increasingly easy to him, until it too has become habitual. Every natural impulse which the child possessed has been strengthened by use, until, in these few years, what were originally only tendencies have become habits difficult to supplant. The same thing holds true of his deliberate acts of will. These seem to be the result of the balancing of his original impulses and desires, but they are so only to a partial extent. His experience of life, his customary lines of thought, his habitual behaviour, these, even more than his early tendencies, now influence him in coming to a decision. In his manner of willing, in his manner either of yielding to or conquering his original impulses, in his normal behaviour, in work time and in play time, in the final decisions which he is called upon to make in the little difficulties which confront him, as well as in those manners and customs which have rapidly become second nature, and which we are accustomed to speak of more specifically as his "habits," in all this the child has become in these few years a resultant of his past self. His behaviour at 5 or 6 is the outcome of the habits in which he has either grown up unconsciously, or in which he has been trained deliberately, from his early infancy.

A little lad, 6 years old, had just begun to go to school. He had enjoyed the experience. Everything had been a delight to him, the games, the lessons, the companionship of the other children, even the excitement of going and coming. But after he had gone regularly for about a week, he announced at breakfast that, on that particular morning, he was not going as usual. He did not feel ill, he liked the school—he simply did not *wish* to go; to-morrow, maybe, he would go again. His Mother was sorely puzzled; persuasion and commands only increased the boy's agitation—what was the cause of this curious dislike of going? At last the little lad broke into tears—"I *do* like going to school, I *know* I do," he said, "but I don't want



to make a habit of anything!" With this feeling most of us would sympathize.

From the Law of Habit, however, there is no escape for young or old. Every impression which we receive, every action which we do, leaves its mark upon our brains. Hence, as we have seen, knowledge grows; hence, habits are formed. Our nervous systems develop in accordance with the way in which they have been exercised, to use Dr. Carpenter's words, just as a sheet of paper or a coat, folded again and again in the same way, tends to fall afterwards into the same folds. A certain action once performed, even though hard at first, is more easily performed the second time, and the more frequently it is repeated, the more easily it is done, until finally it becomes almost second nature; an impulse once realized in action grows stronger, it is therefore more likely to produce action a second time, and increasing strength is in this way gradually added unto it. Habits of one kind or another are formed inevitably.

If, then, from this Law of Habit there is no escape, as long as we have bodies; if, by the time we are six years old, three-fourths of our actions are the result of habits already formed; if, by the time we are grown-up,  $\frac{99}{100}$  of our actions (according to Prof. James) are so determined; if, in this way, our very life and destiny is dependent on the habits which we form as we grow; then it follows that we cannot exaggerate the importance of the formation of *right* habits in childhood, neither can we exaggerate our own responsibility, as parents, in their formation.

The children in the nursery cannot realize, and we do not wish them to realize, how much the habits which they are then forming will count later on in their lives. We need to realize this for them, and it is our business to see that, from the beginning, a solid foundation of good habits is laid on which they themselves can build later on.

When we insist upon their giving their whole attention to the little duties of dressing and undressing, of folding up their clothes, etc., we are training them in concentration, a power which can be made a mental habit, and which will be of incalculable value to them in later life. We are training them for a wiser expenditure in the future, when we insist that something sensible should be bought even with the weekly penny. "Make me king of all that goes under this hat," Carlyle used to say.



We are enabling the children to master their impulses in later life when we expect them, as children, to face small disappointments bravely instead of grumbling; when we insist that they learn to control their tempers. Small duties, conscientiously done, make them capable of accomplishing larger duties. If we take care of the "*habits*" in the broad sense, the *capacity* will look after itself.

There are two main reasons why our active interference in the matter is essential. In the first place, if the child is allowed to go more or less his own way, and form bad habits if he chooses, he *may* learn by experience later that his way was wrong; but he *may not*. The mere fact of possessing such bad habits may blind him to his own faults; and even if he does discover and try to remedy his weakness, the task is a hard one, while he has, through his early bad habits, meanwhile lost many valuable opportunities. In the second place, if in a conflict between the good and bad impulses in the child we leave the process to Nature alone, the good impulse *may* win in the battle; but again it *may not*. And if it fails, the result is not merely that, for *once*, the wrong has triumphed, but the wrong impulse is strengthened by coming out victorious; and because it is stronger, it is more likely still to win again when next a conflict occurs. The child's nature is a complex of good and evil, we cannot safely leave him to work out his own salvation; we must see to it as far as possible that the right always wins, that good habits—and not bad ones—are formed.

In the formation of habits, two methods are possible; both are used to a certain extent by every one who is responsible for children. In the one case, we make use of the child's capacity for pleasure and pain; by punishing the bad actions and rewarding the good, we gradually make right doing habitual. In the other case, we make use of the child's natural impulses in the right direction; by associating these with the right actions, we gradually form desirable habits. Our judgment tells us that, whenever possible, the latter is the better course to pursue, though, in particular instances, we may occasionally have to fall back on the former method. Concrete examples will make the distinction between these two methods clearer. Suppose that we are beginning to train a small boy, about two years old, in the "art of independence". To begin with, he must learn to put



on his own clothes. This is a difficult task for many children, until strength and skill in the baby fingers have been gradually acquired by practice. Unless the little man is by nature intensely eager to do things "by self," he naturally prefers that Nurse should put on his boots or his coat, and leave him free to use his time and energy on other matters, which are far more interesting to him. The sight of the boots, therefore, does not arouse in him any corresponding desire to put them on for himself; he might even naturally rebel against the imposed task. Now his nurse can go to work in either one of two ways. She can punish him for disobedience, if he refuses to put them on, and reward him for obedience, if he does what she tells him. In either case, she is using his capacity for pleasure and pain. Or she can find some natural impulse in him, which she can make use of as a motive-force to action. Suppose that the little lad longs to be a soldier, or to be a man like his Father. Nurse can then make him realize that manhood is out of the question while she has to put on his boots! What soldier before he went to battle, what father before he went to business, ever had a nurse to put on his boots for him? In this way, she associates with the sight of the boots, the thought that it is *manly* to put them on alone; the desire to become manly is strong in the boy, strong enough to overcome difficulties and lead to action. He therefore makes the necessary effort; once made, owing to the Law of Habit, it is easier to make the effort a second time; and gradually the demand upon his attention becomes less and less, until the boots are put on automatically, and the habit has been formed.

A diagram adapted from the one given by Professor James<sup>1</sup> makes the brain process clearer. The first figure shows the instinctive action (or in this case inaction) following from the sight of the boots. Each time this inaction is permitted to occur, the fact will be impressed upon the higher brain centres of memory and will, the impression will be gradually deepened, and the *habit* of laziness formed.

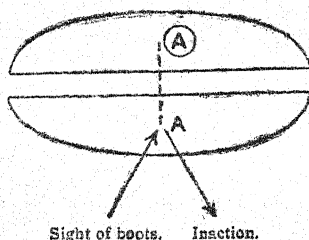
<sup>1</sup> "Talks to Teachers".



The second figure shows the result of the association in the child's mind of the sight of boots with the idea of manliness, an association which results in the desired action. This is

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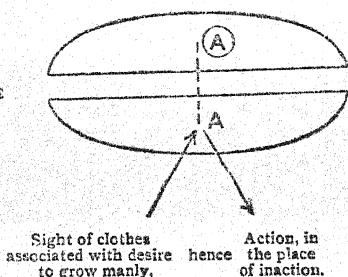
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THE PROCESS  
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the new experience which is continually urged upon the child, and which, constantly repeated, brings about the habit of independence.

To take a second example. Suppose the habit which we wish the child to gain is that of tidiness. We can either tell him that unless his clothes are folded up, his toys put away, etc., he will suffer by the loss of some treat; or we can promise him a reward, such as a story at bedtime or a piece of cake for tea, if he does these particular things throughout the day—and in either case, he would probably bear in mind what he had



been told. But another and better method of teaching him to be tidy is open to us. We can make use of his natural desire to be helpful. A small child will put his bricks in the box, his train in the corner, his coat in the cupboard, he will fetch and carry for us in the nursery, under the impression that he is *helping* us, and is therefore an important little person. Tidiness as a duty makes no special appeal to him; but he loves to lend a helping hand. By working upon this desire, we get a good start in the direction of the habit we wish to instil—just as by working on the child's desire to be manly, we persuaded him to use every effort to put on his own boots. We did not have to *command* these actions to be done, because we are able to establish their connexion with the child's natural desires. Repeated opportunities for the exercise of such desires gradually produce the habit.

Such a method of going to work is the best possible. The child regards himself at the start as our ally and not our enemy—he himself *desires* the habit; it is deep-rooted in the natural impulses of his character; and provided we insist tactfully on the repetition of such good actions, without exception, the habit is formed easily enough. But—and this is an important point—such impulses are not always at hand when we want them. They are transitory and intermittent, and often, alas! capable of being appealed to most strongly when they are of the least practical use. This is the case both with the desire for manliness and the desire to help. In the busy life of a nursery full of children, we often find their independence trying, and reject their kindly aid, because we can manage more quickly without them. Their impulse to be manly and helpful has not been cultivated when they were young, and later, when we should be glad of their independence and their assistance, the strong impulse has passed away and is only with difficulty recalled. It is impossible for us to overestimate the importance of watching for, and making use of, the child's good impulses *when* he feels them. This demands considerable patience and self-control on our part, but the effort is well worth the making. Not only is it true that virtue is never “so deeply rooted as when it has its beginnings implanted by nature in those (tendencies) which are ours from the very birth,” but, by encouraging the child's good impulses, we are



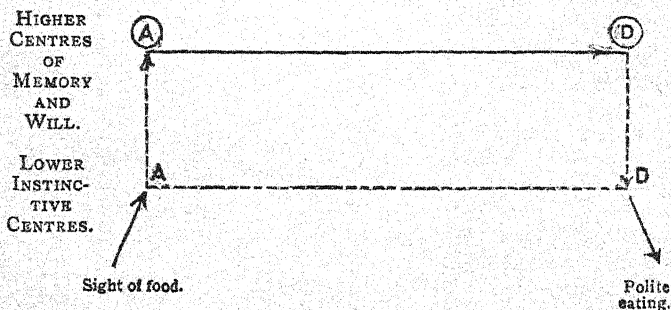
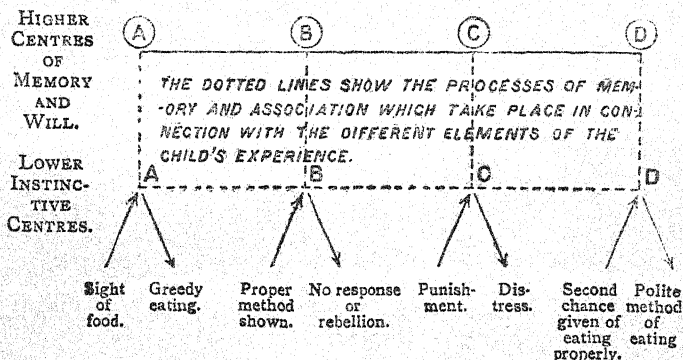
making good habits a pleasure to him to acquire, and we are doing more than forming *mere* habits, we are helping to develop the child's character.

*Whenever possible, we must then graft the habit on to some tendency in the right direction which the child already possesses.* But these good impulses are not always there to be called out; moreover some habits are not, and cannot be made, of any special interest to the child. We have then to fall back on the child's love of pleasure, or dislike of pain, as the motive force to action.

Suppose, for instance, we are teaching a baby to eat his food nicely, instead of allowing him to over-fill his spoon and try to cram all the contents into his mouth at once. There is no special impulse in the right direction to which we can appeal, the baby is too young; his natural desire, if he has a healthy appetite, is to eat greedily. What course is it then best to pursue? To begin with, it is better not to take undue notice of the baby's bad manners. A fuss is very likely just what he enjoys. By our noticing unduly what he does, we deepen the impression which his own actions are making upon his higher centres of memory and will, and by deepening the impression, we render the action more likely to recur. To avoid this difficulty, we try to turn the baby's thoughts away from his unmannerly actions. When these are out of the focus of his mind, we are able to introduce into the focus the right actions which we desire him to remember. For instance, he puts too much porridge into his spoon at once. Half emptying the spoon, we say brightly, "Where is that pussy? He'll have to have his dinner, when Baby has done." Baby peeps for pussy, and forgets to be angry at our interference with his meal! The half-spoonful is put unconsciously into his mouth. Then we half fill his spoon again, and so gradually win him into the habit of taking less. In this way we may succeed without a struggle—but we may not! There are babies who refuse to have their attention so distracted, who brook no interference, however delightfully disguised. When we show them the right way of eating, as tactfully as possible, they reject our advances, and insist upon doing what they wish with their own meal! "It's *my* way and I like my own way best"—they would say, could they formulate their thoughts. There is, then, no help



for it ; the inevitable struggle must be faced ; we punish the rebellious babe, who weeps in his distress ; he promises better things, and we give him another chance of eating his food nicely. If he has sufficiently suffered, he, for the time, gives up his own way for ours, and this piece of experience in all probability has to be repeated either few or many times, without exception, until finally the habit of polite eating has been formed. This again can be represented in diagrams as follows :—



The second diagram shows the result of the constantly repeated chain of experiences. The impressions made upon the higher centres of memory and will are so definite that, at the sight of the food, the baby no longer follows his instinctive impulse to eat greedily, but, as unconsciously, follows the ten-



dency to action which he has acquired, i.e., to eat politely; the intermediate processes are blotted out.

In this way, one habit after another may be formed. *As a result of repetition, paths are formed in consciousness along which thought tends to travel until good habits are established*, in much the same way as a footpath is made across a field by people walking again and again in the same direction. It is evident that *a single exception, especially in the early stages, undoes much of the work.*

Now it is clear, from a consideration of these diagrams, that if the natural reaction, (in this case that of greedy eating,) had become habitual through neglect, the process of supplanting it by the acquired reaction of polite eating would necessarily have taken longer, and have involved a greater struggle. *The earlier, therefore, that we begin to train the baby in good habits the better*; if we wait until he is older and "capable of reason"—as we say—many bad habits are certain to have been formed in the meantime.

It is further evident that these brain paths, or tendencies to action, are formed as the result of repeated *actions* on the child's part, not as the result merely of repeated *instructions* on our part. We could *talk* to the child for ever, but unless we also insisted upon the doing of the action, and even, if necessary, definitely provided him with opportunities for doing it, the habit could never be formed.

When this second method is used, the motive-force which we call into play in order that we may get the action which we desire, is that of fear of punishment or hope of reward; the child is not induced to do good because he desires to be good. Hence *such a method by itself is not sufficient to yield habits of virtue.* It may be useful on occasions, or for a time, since the love of right sometimes follows the mere doing of the right, because the right is insisted upon—but, as the *sole* method, it can be relied on only to produce good manners, and not good desires.

A boy, aged  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , was playing in the nursery with the other children. Amongst his toys was a cart, which he was not then using, and with which his younger sister wanted to play. The cart had been given to the boy on his birthday, it was "his," and he did not want to lend it. His Mother tried to draw out



the unselfish side of his nature, but to no avail. At last, she said gravely: "I cannot feel happy and 'smiling' with you, Sonnie, until you are kind and unselfish". But he remained obdurate. For more than half an hour, he went on with his own game, keeping the cart unused beside him, although he showed that his joy in play had departed, because his Mother was not pleased with him. A big struggle was going on. At last, his Mother again asked him: "Sonnie, would you like Jeanie to play with your cart?" Eagerly he answered, "Yes," running across to his Mother with the words: "Now, smile".

Such a method, and it is one often used, might lead to the mere handing over of the toy for the sake of the child's personal peace or comfort; he might not *desire* to share—he might yield, merely because he was miserable unless the people around were pleased with him. Repeatedly used, it might result in *apparent* unselfishness, but the child might still have preferred to keep his toys to himself, if only he was left alone to do so; he is only becoming well-behaved. *The difference between good manners and real goodness lies in this: Manners may become mechanical, but a good deed can no longer be called a good action when it is devoid of feeling, or when it is done from motives of self-interest.* The child's actions may have become unselfish, apparent success may have been gained, but we need to be critical of ourselves in our apparent successes as well as in our evident failures.

Now this does not mean that, in the formation of good habits, we are to be constantly examining the roots, as it were, of the child's actions; this would be harmful in the extreme. It only means that we must bear in mind that goodness is more than a matter of outward conformity. Outward conformity, to a certain extent, must be obtained, partly for the sake of the general discipline of the nursery, partly because it is often good for the child to act rightly, even under compulsion. But the production of right feeling *after* the doing of the action is not by any means certain, and this latter method needs, therefore, to be supplemented by the definite cultivation of those right impulses, which are not naturally strong enough to produce right action, and which, when once cultivated, can be used as a basis for the good habit. Not only must selfishness then be checked by punishment, but unselfishness must be encouraged, by the



welcoming of little acts of spontaneous kindness, by giving the child plants or animals of his own to care for, and so forth. The actions, whose repetition matters most in the training of the child, are those in which, by some means or other, we call forth the child's latent capacities for goodness. Such actions, constantly repeated, form habits of virtue, not merely because they are repeated, but because, at each repetition, they call out the child's good impulses, and, by so doing, strengthen and confirm them.

Our task, then, is not merely to form good habits of a more or less mechanical kind, important though this is; *we need further to strengthen those impulses which result in good actions, and to base good habits upon such strong, stable and good desires.* To form such mechanical habits, without unnecessary struggles and weariness on the child's part, to base habitual good behaviour on a deep-seated love of goodness, by watching for and encouraging the child's good impulses—whenever, and however feebly, they may show themselves—demands much patience and insight on our part, much loving and careful study of the children's natures. Nevertheless, knowing how dependent are the child's future character and destiny on his habits, whether good or bad, we shall neither spare ourselves nor the child; we shall confidently insist upon the small "strokes of daily effort" which must in time infallibly yield the good result.

Yet, all the while, we must bear in mind that it is not the formation of set habits, however good, at which we aim, but the development of a character, whose good impulses have been so strengthened by habitual use, that they are alert and free to express themselves continuously in an ever-increasing range of activities. Habits should be our servants, not our masters.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE GROWTH OF HABITS.

The bearing of the psychology of habit on discipline—Canons laid down—"Difficult" children—Heredity and the law of habit—The habit of concentration of attention—"Golden Rules" in the formation of habits—Need for resource—Good behaviour at meals—Practical suggestions—Habits of virtue—Punishment, of secondary importance—Goodness gained through the gradual strengthening and persistent calling forth of right impulses—Illustrations.

CERTAIN general conclusions in connexion with discipline result from this discussion of the Law of Habit. We have seen that this constant calling forth of desirable actions, either, best of all, through the encouragement of the child's own right impulses, or, in the last resort, by means of punishment or reward, results in the formation of memory paths in the brain corresponding with the course of thought, and making the doing of right actions increasingly easy. These paths are formed by constant repetition, from which, if possible, there should be no deviation. What does this amount to, when interpreted from the point of view of discipline?

(1) First, in most children, when quite young, there is a naturally strong tendency to respond to suggestions. This should be used whenever possible, since the habit is then formed with less effort, and the memory paths are imprinted the more firmly on the child's mind when we use his natural impulses. *The habit we wish the child to acquire or the command we intend him to obey, must therefore be, whenever possible, presented so brightly as to seize hold of his imagination.* When this is accomplished, no spirit of rebellion is aroused, and the suggested idea naturally realizes itself in action. The child is



made to follow the dictates of our will, without realizing that he is so doing.

(2) Secondly, if the child fails to respond to our suggestions, certain actions must be made artificially unpleasant by means of punishment, since the right action must for the most part be invariably attained, whether the child is in a responsive or in a contrary mood. Both punishment and reward have their rightful place in discipline. *In all cases, the voluntary doing of the right action should be rewarded with approval*, and the child is then conscious of a sense of harmony with his surroundings; *disobedience, or non-responsiveness, should be met with disapproval*, and result in a loss of such harmonious feeling. If the child's life is full of joy and sympathy, even the small baby of 18 months, or younger, will be unhappy when he has done wrong, and, in his baby way, will try to coax back a smile into our faces.

(3) Thirdly, too many people should not be managing the child at once—for different people will in all probability mean different standards of action, and confusion must result. *It should be an understood thing that the child is not expected to obey every grown person*—only the Father, the Mother, the nurse and the teacher, and any one put in authority on any special occasion; and that these should, as far as possible, exact the same standard of behaviour from the child, in order that good habits may be more readily acquired. We are trying to form certain memory paths in the child's mind by means of repeated acts. Any exception, resulting from the enforcement of a different standard of action, undoes much of the work. Moreover, a large part of the child's happiness consists in a sense of harmony with his surroundings; for this the child naturally seeks, striving to assimilate his conduct to the examples, customs and ideals he finds around him. Such harmony is less easily attained when the discipline of the nursery differs from that of the dining-room, the home from that of the school—or when, even in the nursery, the child is permitted at one time what he is refused the next.

(4) Fourthly, *we must give the child ample opportunity for the exercise of his will and check his initiative as little as possible*, since the child's own will, rightly trained and directed, is a force which we need to use in forming his habits. Constant checks are only irritating, and tend to create in him a desire for rebellion.



"Don't say 'don't,' without first considering whether it is necessary"—should be one of the first maxims in both home and school life.

(5) And finally, we need, in the formation of habits, to *respect each child's individuality*, and not to exert, either by praise or by blame, too dominant an influence. To form good habits does not mean merely to produce a number of pattern children; we want something more than mere good behaviour.

These, then, are the main points to be borne in mind in connexion with the general method of training the children in good habits. Such training is not always an easy matter. Progress is often slow, actions which have long ago become almost second nature to us, or which seem simple, are hard for the children to acquire. We are constantly repeating the same orders, checking the same faults. In a group of small children, their imitative instincts are used in copying each other's troublesome little tricks of behaviour rather than the decent manners of the grown-up people! But we ought neither to grow weary nor to despair, for we are not only creating special habits, we are gaining influence over the children and forming the basis of character. In the often wearisome task of forming the simpler habits, such as attention, order or neatness, behaviour at table, punctuality or cleanliness, we need constantly to bear this thought in mind. "The habits of obedience and trust . . . established by the exercise of authority resting on its own right, can be enlisted later on in the service of the aim of all true discipline, the production of a self-governing being."<sup>1</sup>

It may seem to some that the practical suggestions given in this chapter are needless. Quiet, even discipline, a simple method of frequent correction, coupled with the ordinary punishments which have for generations proved effectual, they have found sufficient to produce good results. Why go out of our way to make the acquisition of good habits especially interesting? Why study the children, in order to find, at the right moment, good impulses upon which good habits may be grafted? Before our own day, children were not so studied; is it not possible that a method involving less thought may lead to

<sup>1</sup> "The Child," by W. B. Drummond.



equally satisfactory, if not to more satisfactory, results? The answer to such an argument seems to me to be this. Some children are comparatively easy to deal with, whether at home or at school. Possessing good health and a stable nervous system, inheriting a minimum of undesirable impulses and a large proportion of strong and desirable impulses, living in a social environment which helps them towards right thinking and doing, and responsive to the good influences which are brought to bear upon them—such children almost train themselves into good habits; no special thought is required. But it is surely a matter of experience that others, in an equally stimulating environment, are not so responsive. Their natures are perhaps more complex; strong undesirable instincts are at war with their desirable instincts; they are less open to receiving impressions from those in whose charge they are placed; they follow their own bent—sometimes in pursuit of good, often in pursuit of bad, ends. Such children, difficult to deal with, are often only in need of being understood. Some people, gifted with special insight, just because they understand, get the best out of them; in the hands of others, they are as “naughty” as they can possibly be. Good habits are formed with difficulty; often, at any rate while they are in the nursery, they are not formed at all, and the child has to be sent away to boarding school “to be licked into shape”. Surely it is a confession of failure on our part if either boys or girls have to be sent away, because there is no managing them at home. Our discipline has evidently been at fault. Special care or thought was required, and we have somehow not given it.

Not only do we often fail completely in the management of certain difficult children, but we also permit many to grow up with faults of temperament which, though not making them unendurable in the home, nevertheless may be a serious handicap to their mental or moral growth. We too readily, for instance, treat such faults as a want of concentration and thoroughness in work, a hasty temper, a sluggish disposition, timidity or jealousy, as if they were as much part of the child's inheritance, as inevitable, as the colour of his eyes or hair! Because we do not think sufficiently, we blame Heredity instead of ourselves. We can do much to modify character. Nature is *on* our side as well as against us, and when she is against us as



regards the inherited instincts of the child, she is *for* us in this, that every impression which we fix upon the child's mind is retained there, and that any action which we insist upon the child's doing once, he does the more easily the next time, and each time with increasing ease.

It is in such difficult cases that it pays us to go out of our way to make the process of acquiring habits interesting, to avoid difficulties by forestalling wrong doing. The more we can get such children *with* us rather than *against* us, the more we can strengthen, by every means in our power, the good impulses they possess—the better for us in our life with them in home or school, the better for them for all time.

Taking for granted, then, that some people possess a natural genius in dealing with children, and that some children are so easily trained that no special thought is required, for the sake of the difficult children a few practical suggestions are offered

In illustration of the main principles involved in the psychology of habit, let us take first the learning to write, for the actions involved in writing, though at first acquired consciously and with difficulty, gradually become habitual and automatic. Some children require no special stimulation in the gaining of this, any more than of any other habit. Pleasantly and readily they follow the suggestions of the grown-up person, and practise their lines and loops, their pot-hooks and hangers, without becoming tired by the continual doing of actions, prompted from without rather than within, without finding the work drudgery. Under a mechanical method of teaching, others would, however, make but slow progress. Careful and exact work comes hardly to them, constant repetition is a weariness; their attention tends to wander constantly from the less interesting matter, which should be in the focus of their minds, to the more interesting things, which are constantly straying in from the margin. Yet, by these children, too, the habit of good writing has to be acquired; as the result of repetition, memory-paths must be formed in their consciousness, along which thought will travel, so that the right actions become habitual.

In what way, then, is the psychology of habit made use of in our modern methods of teaching the child to write?



If he makes rows of straight strokes, we suggest that they represent a long row of soldiers, marching in ordered line past the inspecting officer. His interest and imagination are aroused. Care and attention become worth while, for the regiment is surely disgraced if many of the soldiers fail to hold themselves erect as they march!

If, at a later stage, letters have to be made uniform in size, drawn accurately between the lines, we may suggest that Master Point must now move slowly and carefully from the bottom to the top of the house, he must never go through the ceiling on to the roof, nor down through the floor into the cellar! No break must be made in his steady progress; little Master Point cannot yet jump, he can only crawl! So letter by letter is practised separately. But, as Master Point grows more capable and independent, he begins to creep from one letter-house to the next, moving slowly along the whole row of houses which we call a "word". When he can do this, now and again, between the words, he dares to leave his paper-world, and to jump from the end of one word to the beginning of the next.

Whether, as in the "Look and Say" method, the words are at first regarded as complete wholes, thought-signs expressed on paper, which the child observes and draws, as he might try to draw a ship or a man; or whether they are built up of separate letters, each a sign for a sound; the principles involved in forming with ease the habit of writing are the same. The work is made interesting; for interest lessens the strain of attention and counterbalances the monotony of repetition; that to which the child *likes* to attend, he finds it easier to remember.

The imaginative child is so ready to be interested. He invents his own simple tale, and sees it written down for others to read, in the "Look and Say" method; or we weave a story about Master Point, and, with his pencil, he follows our suggestions, interested, attending, enjoying; and at the same time, all unconsciously, acquires the habit of correct writing.

But correctness is not all; freedom of movement, which gives a wider range of power, is as necessary as accuracy in detail. Big sheets of brown paper and coloured crayons, chalk and a plain linoleum fixed around the room to give ample black-board space for each child, are better for this purpose than pencil and paper. Freely and boldly, the children sketch the



shapes which resemble the letters, and experience the joy of creation by investing these shapes with reality. They draw a number of round o's, a tiny stalk is attached to each, there are apples enough to satisfy them all! Birds fill the heavens when they practise the forms (L) wanted when they write their t's, i's and u's, etc., and a few clouds in the sky complete the picture. Snakes twist about as they practise the printed s, and, with the addition of green-chalk grass and a few bushes, they are living in the jungle. Hand, eye and ear, the powers of observation and of comparison, are being simultaneously trained; but the work is made alive through imagination and the joy of creation. It is done with less effort, it is remembered better. It is *mere* repetition which dulls interest, weakens memory and leads to inattention. If attention is paid—and attention depends on interest—then, and only then, is it true that the more frequently an impression is made, the more firmly it is registered on the brain.

The fact that writing, good or bad, is a *habit* is often forgotten. Bad habits, as we have seen, can only be uprooted by the constant and persistent calling forth of right actions *without exception*, and it is because the ill effect of such exceptions is not realized that the effort to improve an older child's handwriting so often fails. It is taken for granted that all the written work of the class must be done by each individual member of that class, whether or no he is at the same time striving to improve his handwriting, and this almost obliges the child to continue to do much of his work in the faulty handwriting, which has become easy and natural to him, practising the better writing only occasionally. He is therefore attempting to acquire the new habit, in spite of those continual exceptions which undo so much of the work of improvement. If the bad habit is to be supplanted as quickly as possible, for a time no exception must be permitted. Only so much of each piece of written work must be done as can be written properly in the time allowed.

In the creation of good habits, as in the correction of bad ones, whatever the habit is, it is repeated right actions only which can bring about the formation of the right stimulus-to-action paths in the brain. The good habit, when acquired, is due, not to our repeated instructions, which are merely impres-



sions from without, though these are of some help, but to the child's interested co-operation, which alone sets going the real springs of action.

This necessity for whole-heartedness in right action on the child's part cannot be exaggerated: talking on our part never does any good, unless we see that the child not only listens, but understands, and therefore desires to do. Repeatedly the teacher had called Sidney to order for fidgeting with his pencil during the lesson, but he had got into the habit of fidgeting, he did not know when he was doing it, and talking was of no avail. Referring one day to his teacher's constant and fruitless efforts to cure him of this trick, he indignantly exclaimed: "He has never tried to *cure* me, he has only *jawed*!"

In the formation of habits, four "Golden Rules" can be laid down, of which perhaps the first is the most important.

(1) *Do not "preach" to the child, for it is only by repeated actions on the child's part that the habit can be formed.*

(2) *Begin early to insist on right actions, for, by beginning early, we make it easier for the child.*

(3) *Persist, permitting no exception, until, by whatever variation of method, we have obtained the invariable performance of the actions on which we lay stress.*

(4) *Realize the difficulty, in certain cases, of those actions on which we are insisting, and therefore find some way of gaining the child's sympathy and interest.*

It is resource which we need beyond everything, that we may be able to make interesting what is naturally uninteresting.

Florence, for instance, cannot deliver a simple message correctly; she is inaccurate and forgetful, and running messages "bothers" her. We make our plans to help her. While we are busy with Baby or sewing in the nursery, we can play at "shopping" with her. Eagerly Florence will remember a long list of things which are wanted at the grocer's, over by the chest of drawers; another difficult message will be delivered at the butcher's, not a detail forgotten. This is all play to her; but her memory is being trained, and real messages will be carried to Mother later on the more accurately.

Bobby, the tiny soldier of 4, finds it, as a rule, very hard to obey promptly—but if Nurse pretends to be his commanding



officer, he drills in his very best style, giving his full attention to her commands; and the *habit* of attention and prompt obedience is thereby cultivated.

Edward, like the mock hero in Charles Lamb's poem, cries lustily over the smallest hurt, and rushes screaming to Nurse if a dog only looks at him in the street. A paper pinned up on the wall, on which day by day Nurse makes a red chalk mark every time Edward displays unwonted courage, fires him with the desire to overcome his fears, and his "bravery chart" each day gleams with more and more of the soldier's scarlet. The children are for the most part so ready to respond, so quickly interested, we ought never to be daunted in the formation of any desirable habit. Granted that we are bearing these rules in mind, we ought, like the proverbial Englishman, never to know when we are beaten.

In a family of high-spirited children, behaviour at meals often presents, at home, frequent difficulties. Good behaviour should gradually become automatic, or very nearly so; but when a number of children of different ages are together in the nursery, full of life and energy, brimming over with mischief and fun, it is by no means an easy matter. Sometimes the elder children are the chief cause of the difficulty. Fresh from school, where their natural instincts in the direction of movement and noise have been to a certain extent suppressed, there is "steam to be let off" at dinner-time. There is so much to tell and so much to hear, so many points of interest in connexion with school to discuss, so much spare physical energy, they have but little attention to give to the hundred and one details which constitute good manners. The little ones, steadier for their exercise in the open air, and fresh after their morning rest, could probably behave well without much difficulty, if they were alone—but they are infected by the frolic of the others, and imitate them in their mischief as far as they are able. Or perhaps the baby is the chief cause of meal-time difficulties. He is beginning to feed himself; and the process does not occupy his whole attention. He stretches across the table in the effort to reach a tumbler, and over goes the water. He plays with the knives and forks of those who are nearest him, or tries to pull their hair; he uses the wrong hand to feed him-



self, or nearly chokes in the effort to eat too quickly. His mischief is infectious; the rest of the family forget all about manners, and need constant keeping in order—yet almost the whole of our attention is obliged to be given to looking after that one dear baby! X

Suppose the older children are the ringleaders, silence for a while may help to solve the difficulty. When no talking is allowed, they are free to pay attention to what they are doing; and a few minutes' silence at the start, or at any time during the meal when manners are getting slack, serves to steady the children for some little time after. Only experience can show if silence is beneficial, and if so, for how long a time it is required; but if it answers our purpose, it should be imposed *in order to help the children* to remember the good manners which are so essential, and *not as a punishment*.

Chattering and fidgeting are natural, especially after a morning of work, and there is nothing "naughty" in forgetting the many tiny details which, though important to us, must seem unimportant to children. Silence for a time reduces the number of outside interests, which, by comparison, make good behaviour still less interesting; and it is from this point of view that we impose it. If the children still find it hard to behave, we can help them further by specially rewarding the effort which we know it is hard for them to make. For instance, a "meal chart," ruled in columns for the different days and the different children and pinned up on the nursery wall, on which we put a red mark for good, and a black mark for bad behaviour, helps to make it more interesting to behave well. In a wholesome way, they try, day by day, to beat their own record, and each child tries to get his column as red as possible! Any plan will do. Different methods will answer with different children, but the principle is always the same—in cases of special difficulty, add an artificial interest to what is naturally uninteresting.

But very possibly the baby is the unconscious ringleader of the disorder: then only experience can prove to us to what an extent the demoralizing influence which he exerts is due to the freedom permitted to that left hand—a freedom which he naturally abuses! If that hand is fastened out of the way, he needs but little supervision; we are free to attend to the other children, consequently all goes smoothly; and Baby him-



self no more objects to having his hand fastened than he does to having his feeder put on, both are simply part of the process of having a meal. If we forget, and when he has begun his mischievous tricks, call him "naughty," and try to restrict his liberty, he objects lustily; but he would equally object to having his feeder put on in the middle of the meal after being blamed for soiling his frock!

We need to understand *why* every now and again good behaviour is difficult, and, by understanding, conquer the difficulty, rather than blame the children. For instance, it often makes all the difference at meal-times, as at school, how we seat the children, and in particular which children sit on either side of us. Bobby and Cuthbert, aged  $3\frac{1}{2}$  and 5, gave no end of trouble at nursery meals, and which was the worst of the two it would have been hard to say, for whatever the one did which he should not, the other copied. Meal after meal Bobby sat opposite Cuthbert; and neither correction nor punishment was of any avail. It was finally suggested to Nurse that the boys should sit on the *same* side of the table, and that she should sit between them. The problem of their bad behaviour was solved at once! They could no longer see one another, only Nurse, and she was up to no naughty tricks!

Such small details often make all the difference between good and bad behaviour in a nursery full of impressionable, excitable children. Meal-time difficulties are legion! Some children either will not or cannot eat certain kinds of food—others dawdle or dream over their meals—others are in such a hurry to finish eating that they cannot be taught to "masticate, denticate, grind, and chew, before they swallow". Always our main thought in overcoming our difficulties is the same—*understand the difficulty, lessen the temptation to fall into bad habits, increase the desire to get into good habits.*

Evelyn, aged  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , is a sad dawdler over her meals; her appetite is small and capricious; the other people at the table are interesting to listen to and to watch. Her attention is concentrated on them, not on her food, she forgets all about eating, and constant reminders are both useless and trying. By putting her in a room alone to eat her meals, we can lessen the temptation to look about her. If we can make her weary of her solitude, we shall increase her desire to eat properly and so



rejoin the others. Evelyn, with only small helpings, was therefore sent to a room alone; if she had finished at the same time as the others, she came back at once into the nursery; otherwise she had to wait until Nurse was free to come and attend to her. For ten days she dawdled; but at last she began to weary of the long waitings for Nurse and to give her mind to getting done in time. In three weeks, the bad habit was cured and she rejoined the others—the very suggestion of a meal alone being enough to make her hurry, whenever for a minute she forgot and dreamed again.

Norman was so eager to leave the table and get back to his engine, or so busy talking, that he “bolted” his food—he either had on every occasion to sit till the rest had finished, or he practised silence until he had learnt to give his mind to chewing properly.

Jessie was unable to eat even a spoonful of tapioca pudding without being sick. On one occasion, it was suggested that she should go as a weekly boarder to her school instead of as a day girl, and her mother said that she would tell the teacher about the tapioca, “No, no, Mother,” urged Jessie, “don’t tell her, I could eat it there.”

Without doubt, our minds have an extraordinary influence over our bodies. Food, which cannot be swallowed in the presence of some people, can be eaten alone, or in the presence of others of whom we are in awe. Food disliked under one name can be eaten, slightly disguised, under another name. Only experience of our own can prove to us the extent to which dislikes in food can be overcome. They are well worth overcoming. We should show no dislikes ourselves; we should insist upon a morsel—a teaspoonful at the outside—of all ordinary wholesome food being eaten; we should permit no expression of dislike at the table, for children are imitative in this respect; and when the difficulty seems insurmountable, we should try the effect of solitude. It is the presence of other people, sympathetic or otherwise, which increases the child’s agitation, and may actually render the physical act of swallowing difficult to perform. If only we persevere, one by one the children’s difficulties are overcome, and they will look back with surprise on the time when Brussels sprouts, milk or suet puddings were distasteful to them, or when, like Augustus, they could not eat soup!



The object to be aimed at is to form in the children the habit of eating all good food, without at the same time being hard upon them. The quiet expectation of sensible behaviour, and disregard, as far as possible, of foolishness and hysteria; sympathetic and steady discipline; plenty of humour and resource in dealing with the little ones; and a capacity to arouse the interest of the bigger ones in the dull details of good behaviour; an avoidance of nagging and frequent ineffective punishments—this is what we need in striving for good meal-time habits, just as in striving for good behaviour in any other direction. If one plan fails, we must try to discover why it failed, and adopt another.

#### THE ELEMENT OF CHOICE IN MORAL ACTIONS.

So far I have dealt with those habits in which the mere *doing* was the important matter, apart from any special motive-force within the child. Habits of concentration, the habit of self-control in the face of small troubles, habits of accuracy and tidiness, of good behaviour at meals, these can be deliberately taught and should gradually become more or less mechanical.

Moral actions, on the contrary, must not be the result merely of habits impressed from without. The child must understand "*why*" these things are right. An action cannot be called moral unless the child has *chosen* to do it; his choice depends on right impulses to action from within. Training in moral habits involves, then, the encouragement of the good, combined with the repression of the bad desires.

The question of punishment is dealt with in a later chapter. With some children it is rarely needed; but with others it is a "rudder of education".

Some are, without doubt, particularly difficult to deal with. Their undesirable tendencies are so strong and insistent that, only when these are weakened or killed by pain, do their good impulses seem to have a chance of showing themselves. In the case of strong-willed and responsive children, strong in their bad equally with their good impulses, we need not be unduly anxious; firm discipline, combined with a just appreciation of their characters, will tell in time, for they are strong. It is the unimpressionable, troublesome children who are so



difficult to deal with. All our efforts to develop their good instincts seem at times almost unavailing. We must study to understand them, love them dearly, for they need it sorely, and thoughtfully make use of the levers of fear and love in raising their characters; but, at the same time, we must expect less from them, and not be readily discouraged. Their good desires will develop but slowly, their bad desires die a hard death. Such children are however exceptional. For the most part, children want to be good—and are ready and quick to respond to any attempt on our part to draw out the good in them.

Habits of virtue result mainly from the gradual strengthening of right impulses by constant use. Through repeated opportunities of doing for others, the boy grows more and more unselfish, until it becomes natural to him to *choose* the increasingly unselfish course of action. Through difficulties bravely faced, he grows braver and braver, until fear becomes less and less possible to him. "Good habits must be rooted in strong and promising instincts".

Let us then consider, from this point of view, the growth of such a habit as that of courage. What are the good impulses which we can, in this case, find and foster so that, in their presence, lack of self-control, timidity, self-distrust, will gradually cease to exist? Such impulses are many, but they are often ignored. When a small child falls and hurts himself, do we not frequently hear the nurse trying to distract his attention from his own injury by arousing his sense of anger towards the object which has been the cause of his hurt? "Naughty floor to hurt Baby. Nurse will slap the naughty floor." The baby begins to forget his hurt in his interest in what is being said. "Baby hit the naughty floor himself," suggests Nurse. It is extraordinary, when we come to think of it, how frequently the small child is taught self-control in these early days by this method of revenge—a method which is untrue in itself and also calls out undesirable instincts in the child. It hardly seems necessary to criticize such a method in detail, to refer to it at all in this connexion is enough to expose not only its weakness, but also its harm.

*Good habits are best cultivated by strengthening and calling forth on all occasions the right instincts which tend in the direction of those habits. If such instincts are too weak to be made use of,*



*we must encourage even their slight manifestations, call them forth by all means in our power, and when they have become strengthened, see that the child uses them on every occasion.*

What are the instincts which can be used—and rightly used—in the cultivation of the child's habit of bravely facing pain or trouble? His natural curiosity and interest in things outside himself can be encouraged, so that in the end he may forget his fears. For instance, John was staying at a farm-house and feared the geese. The farm lad told him that "Father goose was only taking the young ones out for a walk, while the Mother sat on the eggs, so as to get some more children. The Father was taking care of them, and he would only run after you like a policeman if you hurt his children!" Such an explanation roused John's interest and sympathy; it seemed so real and natural; he was not afraid of policemen or of fathers, why then should he be afraid of good Father Goose!

Another natural instinct, on the development of which we can rely as the child grows, is his sense of trust and security in the strength of others—in the grown-up people around him, his Father, his Mother, his nurse, his teachers—and pre-eminently in God. We do not merely tell him that his fears are ridiculous and groundless—even though they may be so from our standpoint. We gradually help him to realize instead that he need not fear, that we, that God, will take care of him.

Some children are keenly anxious to grow up, to grow big and be like Father or Mother, or some big brother who is, in their eyes, a hero. Others long to be soldiers. Such desires can be turned to good account. "Father is brave and strong; if you want to be like Father, you too must try hard to be brave." "If you want to be a soldier when you are big, you must begin to be brave now, as if you were at any rate a little drummer boy."

Lewis, aged 5, loved the hymn "Onward, Christian Soldiers". To be a Christian soldier, as far as he understood what it meant, was his ideal. Clearly it must mean bravery over small hurts, even bravery when dogs were met! Dogs were his one great dread. Saying to himself the chorus of the hymn, "Onward, Christian Soldiers," bravely he tried to pass them by. He never could get further than the word "onward," he *was* afraid, his head



was turned over his shoulder, looking at the dogs, as he said the words—but he learnt to pass them!

One word of caution. It is not well for us to expect too much self-control from a naturally nervous child in these early years; the strain of self-control would be great, and it is better that his natural feelings should find some outlet. We can slowly cultivate his power of self-control, but we should expect only gradually to overcome his fears.

On the other hand, when we are dealing with a child who is naturally free from fear, we should allow whatever natural capacity for courage he possesses, to grow, and not stunt it by encouraging the instinct of fear through our excessive sympathy. There is no need to be nervous lest the child should fall as soon as he begins to be venturesome, nor to run and pick him up every time he tumbles, anxious lest he should have hurt himself. If we do, he will almost *expect* to be injured the next time he falls, and will learn to look for our sympathy.

The principle is the same in the cultivation of the impulse of unselfishness. We can foster every instinct which the child possesses which tends in this direction. We can encourage his pleasure in sharing his toys and help him to realize the delight, and the privilege, of making others happy. We can see that the child not only receives a visit from Santa Claus every Christmas, but is himself a Santa Claus and fills some poor children's stockings. On his birthday, we can help him to find some poor boy who has a birthday too, and let his birthday present include gifts for both—any plan will do which fosters his joy in giving. Children in the middle and upper classes receive so much, and often have comparatively few opportunities for giving. Toys, for the most part, can belong to the nursery commonwealth, given to a particular child, but given for the enjoyment of all. We can foster in the child his "good gift of loving"; and help him to love *many* people, instead of being proud, as we often are, of his somewhat exclusive love for ourselves. We can encourage his spirit of helpfulness and joy in doing for others; the desire to help is common to all children, but it is a capricious impulse generally, and needs careful cultivation. In every way, we can seek to develop his good, unselfish tendencies, only punishing him for selfishness when necessary, and giving such a tendency but little scope.



One further point deserves notice. Occasionally, the child's selfish instincts are unconsciously fostered by grown-up people. They do not seem to realize, for instance, the harm that may be done by the constant saying to the elder child, when a little baby arrives, "Now your nose is put out of joint, you are not the only baby now!"

Maud had a delightfully affectionate and responsive nature for the first three years of her life, that is, until the second baby came. It was her mother's first day down, and naturally she ran, as before, to clamber up on her knee. To her surprise and pain, she was checked, and told that now she was too big to be nursed, Mother had the baby to look after. Maud said nothing. She ran away sulky, apparently. But from that day, she was a changed child. Surely Maud could have been made glad in the baby's coming—feeling that Mother had plenty of room in her heart for two, that Baby was something for her to enjoy as well as Mother, a "real live dolly" who would respond to all her little attentions!

The first child will naturally feel "out of it" when the second comes, if we do not deliberately bring her *into* it again; it is hard for most of us to share what we have before been having all to ourselves. Why should not the first child grow to love *all* babies, before the one baby comes to share the love and attentions of Mother and Nurse? We can take her "baby-visiting" among our friends, and let her get used to seeing a baby in our arms, let her feel the baby in hers, and she will gradually realize how proud she would feel, if only the little baby were her very own. Is it certain that we should jump for joy if suddenly some one came to share with us all that was once ours and ours alone? With a little more imagination and thought on our part, "jealous" would be a word, as a rule, inapplicable to children.

Habits of virtue, like all other habits, are begun in the nursery. We are able there to give the child a good start in the right direction. The right start means much. But, in the early forming of all habits, we must not expect too much in a short time, and, above all things, we need to be keenly aware of the danger of moral forcing. The times in the nursery when the average child is conscious of wrongdoing, or self-conscious at all, should, as far as lies in our power, be few and far be-



tween. To very young children we should not give reasons on every occasion, or at any rate, not let the child expect them to be given. Rather should he know by instinct, if we may put it so, that we have reasons. Motives should not be urged more than is necessary, we can safely take for granted that the right motive is there, and for the most part it will be there. The nature of our commands should be such as to allow the child, wherever possible, freedom of choice, we should give him time to choose. Unnecessary conflicts between his will and ours, between pleasure and duty, should be avoided—but a feeling of law and order and goodness should be as the air which he breathes. He will form ideals; they should be simple, true to his child world, not to our world. So will he grow to love goodness and to work towards it, but in all unconsciousness, as a plant grows towards the light. Moreover, there is that in the nature of most children, as in the nature of the plant, which makes them grow towards goodness if we give them the chance, and only on occasions, and those important ones, should we need to draw their attention to the light towards which they are growing.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WILL.

It is important that the child should *desire* the good habits, i.e., use his own will in the right direction—Meaning of the term “Will”; the conscious direction of the child’s activities towards the attainment of a desired object—Five stages in the development of the will :—

(1) Consciousness of desire and an effort put forth *immediately* to attain it.

(2) Desire controlled, *immediately* and for a moment, in response to suggestion from without.

(3) The child becomes conscious of his own will-power, he therefore desires above all else to use his own will, he is self-willed or “contrary”.

(4) The result of experience is a conflict in the child’s mind between *two opposing* ideas, causing delay, and giving opportunity for thought before action; Simple Deliberation.

(5) A conflict occurs between a *number of opposing* ideas, and results in a prolonged period of hesitation and deliberation, before a decision is finally reached; Deliberation Proper.

Difference between impulsive and deliberate action—Moral judgment involves :—

(1) The knowledge of right.

(2) The desire for the right.

(3) The habit of intelligent right action.

(4) The gaining of self-mastery.

In the last two chapters, I have more than once referred to the fact that it is important, as far as possible, not merely to impose the good habit on the child from without, but to get the child on our side in the *desiring* of the habit, that is, to get him to use his own will in the right direction.

What do we mean when we speak of the will? The word is familiar enough; struggles in the nursery, between the self-will of the children and the will of the grown-up persons in charge, are also familiar enough. But what the will is, how it develops, how we can best train it so that it is rightly used,



—on these matters we are not always so clear. What then do we mean when we use the term "Will"?

Martha, aged 3, objected to taking her medicine; so far it had been a simple matter to force it down, but the time had come when it was desirable that she should be able to take it alone. Persisting in her refusal, she was put into a room by herself. The blind was drawn, she had nothing to play with, sounds of frolic reached her from the nursery; yet there she sat for nearly two hours, and nothing would induce her to open her mouth. Once she forgot and took the medicine when Nurse, dressed as a doctor in Father's overcoat, brought it to her. But no sooner was it in her mouth than she remembered, and put it all out again! Not until two and a half hours had passed, did she weary of her persistent refusal, and yield. What a will the mite possessed to hold out for so long!—is our instinctive comment.

Cuthbert and Meg are playing in the garden; Cuthbert has an engine; Meg a horse. Cuthbert wants to change toys with Meg. "Let me have the horse for a bit, will you?" he asks; but Meg refuses. "Meg, darling," we hear him say in a few minutes, in a coaxing voice, "you can play at going from Manchester to London with this engine, it's such fun; you try for a bit!" But no, Meg knows her own mind and will not change. Cuthbert coaxes; he insists—but Meg is obdurate; and finally he knocks her down and takes the horse by force. Again we should comment on the strong wills of both children.

Baby is sitting in her cot, quiet and happy. She has found a small hole in the wall where she can poke the plaster with one tiny finger. "No, no, Baby," she hears Nurse say from the other end of the room. The hands go back under the bed-clothes, but for a moment only; the hole is too fascinating! Again Nurse checks her, and finally slaps that disobedient hand; but Baby's distress is soon over, and, in spite of punishment, she again puts her finger in that hole. Persistently she uses her own will in defiance of Nurse.

In each case, the child knew what he or she wanted, and strove to satisfy that want. Martha desired not to take the medicine; with all her might she strove to achieve that end. Cuthbert wanted the horse and so did Meg; both did their utmost to possess it. Baby wanted to pick the plaster out of the



hole; she, too, mite though she was, consciously persisted in satisfying her want.

Will, then, is this and nothing more—the *conscious direction of the child's activities towards the attainment of a desired object*. Our wills gradually grow in strength and the activities directed by them increase in complexity; our desires vary, growing less concrete, less simple; the power to attain our desires develops daily—but our will remains the same throughout life. However wide our experience, however difficult of attainment our desire, there is a felt want, and a corresponding effort.

In considering the growth of the will in early childhood, we can distinguish five distinct stages. The first, or the simplest form of will, is seen in the first few months of life, when the baby *desires something, and immediately puts forth an effort to attain it*. He sees a bright light before him and strives to reach it; he hears the sound of his mother's voice and cries to be taken up; he is hungry and cries for food. As he grows stronger, his desires increase in intensity; as his senses develop, he gets to desire more and more; as his memory grows, his desires become less dependent upon the mere physical sensations of the moment; as his knowledge of the outer world, his control over his own movements and his muscular powers develop, the efforts which he makes to satisfy his desires become less crude. He has a clearer idea of what he wants, and wants more; he strives harder, more persistently and with greater capacity—but all the while, he no sooner wants than he strives to get. In this first stage of the will, there is no power of control, no exercise of judgment.

But, very early in his life, the baby becomes capable of exercising some degree of conscious control. Sitting in his high chair in the nursery, he is perhaps occupying himself by throwing his bricks persistently down on the floor, merely desiring to see us stoop to pick them up. We watch him closely, the little hand holding the brick moves again to the side of the chair, but in response to our sharp, "No, no, Baby," he draws it back. The desire to drop it is still there, the natural expression of that desire in action has been voluntarily or involuntarily controlled—but only in response to our spoken command, and only for a moment. His memory is weak, his power of control



slight, he is not yet aware that he possesses a will of his own, that he has the power in him to satisfy, or to control the satisfaction of, his desires; he exercises no judgment, however simple. This, then, constitutes the second stage in the process of development. *The child is now capable of exercising some slight degree of control, but only for a moment, only when prompted from without; self-control proper—the conscious power to master his own impulses—has yet to come.*

About the middle of the second year of his life, he enters on a new stage in the growth of his character. He begins to be aware of the fact that he is an individual, that he can obey or disobey as he chooses, either satisfy his impulses or control them. He now knows that he possesses the power of will; and just as, when he first began to walk, day after day he toddled here and toddled there, rejoicing in the mere exercise of his new powers; so now he uses his own will, not so much in the pursuit of special desires, as for the sheer love of willing. "Shake hands with the lady"—away go his hands behind his back! "Dinner is ready, Baby, come along"—he may have been fretting for food a minute before, but away he runs out of our reach! "Don't step in the puddles"—and in he splashes! We turn down one road for a walk; he immediately desires to go down another! We give him his favourite picture book—he no longer fancies it! He revels in disobedience, not because he desires to give us trouble, but because he *consciously wants to use his own will*, even in defiance of ours. We call him disobedient or contrary, but this third stage is only the natural outcome of his newly acquired consciousness of the power that lies within him. We may often have to punish him for disobedience, but we should permit him as much freedom as possible, and, whenever possible, meet him on his own ground, because we understand how natural and right is this desire of his to control his own actions. We need not worry over his "contrariness". Just as he ceased to run aimlessly from chair to chair when walking was no longer a novelty, so—if we manage him with tact and firmness—he will cease to disobey merely for the sake of disobeying. Gradually he will find out that disobedience does not "pay"; that if he falls in with Nurse's suggestions in certain directions, he will gain more freedom to use his own will in other directions. He will begin to



foresee some of the after-consequences of his impulsive actions, and to take these into account. Yesterday he stepped in the puddle after Nurse had told him not to, and, sad to say, he had to ride home in the mail-cart! He threw his toy out of the window, just for fun, when Nurse had said "No," and he was not able to get it until they went out in the afternoon! He insisted upon climbing up the attic stairs, although Nurse said they were too steep for him to go up alone; he fell and hurt himself! Such experiences are necessarily deeply impressed on his mind; he can no longer blindly follow out the first idea which comes into his head; a doubt now arises as to the advisability of so doing, and he has to choose between two different alternatives. He longs to splash in the puddle, but he also wants to walk and not ride—which shall it be? He longs to explore the forbidden attic, but his head ached with the bruise the other day; shall he risk it again?

There is a conflict of thoughts in his mind. Instead of *immediately* satisfying or controlling his desires as before, instead of *immediately* using his will for its own sake, apart from consequences, he delays and that gives him time for thought. He is called upon, for the first time in his life, to choose. This, then, is the fourth stage in the development of the will, when *two opposing ideas conflict in the child's mind, causing a delay, and therefore giving him an opportunity for thinking before acting.*

Two children, Frank and Mary, aged  $3\frac{1}{2}$  and  $2\frac{1}{2}$ , were given some chocolates just before dinner, but they had to wait until after dinner to eat them. Frank begged to be allowed to have them beside him on the table, promising not to touch them till he got permission; Mary, echoing her brother, cried: "Chust me too, Mother". Both children were "trusted"; he restrained from eating them; she popped one into her mouth the first minute her mother's back was turned! In Frank's mind, there were two conflicting desires—the desire for the chocolate and the desire to be trusted; the latter was strong enough to prevent him touching the sweets; he could have been trusted equally with chocolates by the side of his bed ready for the morning, and, even though left alone to go to sleep, he would never have touched them. His will power had reached this fourth stage, in which he was able to choose between two conflicting desires. But Mary was capable of no such restraining



impulse; only while her mother's eye was upon her was she capable of not touching the chocolates; her will had not yet progressed beyond stage three!

Arthur, aged 5, had had an atlas given him his sister wanted him to lend it to her to look at. But he wanted to keep it all to himself. His mother tried to persuade him to be generous, but he could not part with it. A little time after, whilst he was being dressed to go out, he suddenly burst out laughing. "I heard a voice inside me say, all of a sudden, 'Give it to her, give it to her,'" he said, and he gave it. Two conflicting desires had been struggling for the mastery, when the one suddenly presented itself to him so vividly that he heard, as it were, a human voice.

Neville was only 5. One Sunday afternoon, he went for a walk with his father through a woodland path, that led past an old saw-mill, worked by water-power. Being a hot summer afternoon, they rested for a while under a tree. Presently, little Neville scampered away to the mill race, and was soon deeply interested in the contrivance by which the supply of water to the wheel was regulated. He took hold of the handle and managed to turn it a few inches. Then he left hold and stood still, apparently undecided as to whether he should renew the attempt. He did not renew it, but running back to his father, said, "Daddy, there has been such a battle. The evil spirit fought the good spirit. The evil spirit wanted me to let off the water, but the good spirit said that would not be right. The good spirit won, and I have come to tell you of his victory."

When the child once reaches this fourth stage of Simple Deliberation, the progress in the development of his will is rapid. His experience of life each day becomes more complex. The greater freedom of action, which is now beginning to be his, is widening his knowledge of right and wrong. Actions are no longer grouped by him merely as good or bad; he begins to recognize different degrees of goodness, different degrees of badness. With his increasing knowledge of right and wrong should be combined, as a result of his training, an increasing desire for the right. He is now more open to understand and to receive impressions from without; he has a greater power of forming conclusions of his own; intellect, imagination, and



moral purpose, all are growing in him. When, therefore, a difficulty arises, and he is uncertain how to act, the process of deliberation is necessarily more complex, and his final decision is arrived at only after a prolonged period of hesitation. He is called upon, under such circumstances, to exercise, though in a simple way, what we speak of as Moral Judgment.

This, then, is the fifth and last stage in the development of the will—Deliberation Proper. *The stimulus to action is entirely from within, action is preceded by hesitation and deliberation, and the result is determined by the presence of not merely two, but a number of, conflicting ideas in a complex consciousness.* The will in later life gains in strength and concentration; the desires of early life become its purposes and ideals. The already complex field of consciousness of a child of six or seven becomes, in manhood and womanhood, still more complex, but the problem of will is the same in outline at 7 as at any period in later life, when the up-grown person may deliberate for days, or even weeks, before he decides which is the right course of action to pursue.

Janet, 7 years old, had been sent to buy some biscuits; out of the money given her there was 6½d. in change. On her way home she passed an old woman, selling water-lilies at ¼d. each. The temptation was great, and Janet was not strong enough to resist; she bought one lily. When she got home, she hid the lily in a corner of her bedroom, and gave her mother the 6d. change. No questions were asked; it would never have occurred to her mother to doubt the child's honesty. But Janet felt increasingly uneasy; she hated the sight of the water-lily; she felt lonely and miserable, but she was afraid to confess. Need she tell this time? She would never do such a thing again, and if she said nothing, no one would ever know. Mother was so pleased with her, she would be sad if she knew. Yet, if Mother knew what she had done, and knew also that she hadn't told, that would be even worse. So the child hesitated between the two courses of silence and confession, and for a while did nothing, until at last she could wait no longer and ran to her mother telling all her trouble.

Now it might be that, confused with the conflict of thought, she suddenly forgot that her mother would never suspect her; fearing only lest her mother should find out, impulsively she



made her confession. If so, her action had not been the result of a deliberate exercise of will. But if, on the other hand, she had definitely put aside any mean and cowardly thoughts, realizing more and more vividly the duty of honesty at all costs, and had, by a sheer effort of her will, acknowledged her wrongdoing; this would have been an example of a highly developed voluntary action. In the former case, Janet would have shown *moral impulse*, in the latter, *moral judgment*.

A second example may help to make clearer this distinction between impulsive and deliberate action. Frances, 7 years old, though in most respects a careless little person, exercised much thought in the expenditure of her weekly penny. She was making a scrap album for a Christmas present, and that week, her Saturday penny was to be spent on scraps. From one shop to another she wandered, looking carefully through their stores of scraps, but not feeling sure that she was getting full value for her money at any of them. The afternoon had nearly gone, and the penny was not yet spent. Frances stood thoughtfully considering, then she deliberately returned to the first of the many places she had visited. In those few moments, she had deliberately weighed up in her mind, as far as she was able, the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the various shops, from the point of view of penny sheets of scraps, and her action in returning to the first had been the result of a definite exercise of judgment and will on her part. Had she suddenly felt an appetite for tea, or wearied of the whole business of marketing, and therefore gone into any shop merely because it was close at hand, her action would have been impulsive.

Such deliberation is no easy matter. It is often hard to judge which course of action is the right one; it is often equally hard, when we know the right, to do it. For grown-up people, it is difficult. It is rarely easy for the child, and requires considerable strength of will. Such strength of will is the result of the training given in the first few years of the child's life; he cannot acquire it all at once. It is only as the result of education that his ideas can establish "those strong, stable, well-organized alliances, which will stand (him) in good stead, when the hour comes in which (he) is put to the test, either by a conflict of duties, or by the commoner conflict be-



tween a duty and a temptation".<sup>1</sup> In this process of Deliberation Proper, this last stage in the development of the will, the child is then called upon to exercise his moral judgment.

In what does this moral judgment consist? What do we imply when we use the term? We imply that the child, according to his age and experience, knew what was the right thing to do in certain circumstances; that he possessed the faculty of thinking over different alternatives, and of picking out from among those alternatives, the right, or the better, course of action; that he not only *knew* the right, but *desired* the right, and possessed the *power* to follow the right, when recognized as such, with comparative ease. The child who does the right *impulsively* is a long way behind the one who *deliberately* does the right, in spite of the temptation to do the wrong.

The development of the will depends, then, on the development, separately and in unison, of these four, the desire for right, the knowledge of right, the habit of intelligent right action, and the power of self-mastery. How do they grow? In what way can we influence their growth? How far does freedom of action, and to what extent does obedience to the will of others, serve to strengthen the child's own will power? These questions I shall attempt to answer in the next chapter.

<sup>1</sup>"The Making of Character," MacCunn.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE TRAINING OF THE WILL.

1. **Knowledge of Right and Wrong.**—The child's experience of the result of his different actions in the society of which he is a member—His moral standard—Good *behaviour* and good *conduct*—Ultimate sanction of right or wrong conduct within himself—The voice of Conscience—Contradictoriness of his various experiences—Need for a uniform standard on our part—Avoidance of vague fault-finding.

2. **The Growth of Right Desire.**—Right desires grow through use—Influence of an environment which does not "force," but compels by its persuasive power—Desirable emotions encouraged to show themselves in actions—Influence of physical on moral well-being.

3. **The Habit of Intelligent Right Action.**—Control exercised from without precedes self-control—The latter learnt partly by means of voluntary, whole-hearted obedience—Insistence on right doing by those in authority develops self-control, only when a greater love of, or capacity for, right doing follows the doing of the right.

4. **The Gaining of Self-mastery.**—The claim of the moral law—Self-mastery acquired by practice—Through the exercise of external authority, gradually lessening as the child learns to care for and to do the right, we teach him to become increasingly his own master.

ON those occasions which, now and again, are bound to come to the child, even while in the nursery, when, faced with the temptation to do wrong, he tries to do right, he needs not only to know what is right and to love the right sufficiently to strive towards it, but he needs also sufficient power of control over his own impulses to enable him to follow the right when seen, in spite of the temptation to do otherwise. How is this knowledge and love of goodness, this power of self-control, to be obtained?



## I. KNOWLEDGE OF RIGHT AND WRONG.

As, by repeated experiences treasured in the child's memory and afterwards compared and analysed, he gradually gained his knowledge of the material world, so now in this world of his own actions. As he follows thoughtlessly the impulses within him, some of his actions meet with the approval, others, he finds, with the disapproval of those around him. When they approve, he is pleased; when they disapprove, he in some way suffers. He insists upon pushing his toys off the table on to the floor, in spite of repeated orders to the contrary; his toys are taken from him or his hands are slapped; he suffers pain and is called "naughty". Nurse comes at bed-time to fetch him for his bath; he, wishing to play a while longer, rebels lustily; kicking and screaming, he is carried to the bath-room; "Naughty boy," he hears Nurse say, in forcible tones. He takes his brother's engine from him, or dips his foot in the puddles out of doors; again he is called "naughty". On the other hand, when some chocolate was given him, and Nurse said, "Give Brother some," and he readily held out the sweet, he heard her say, "Good boy, you are kind". It was dinner-time and his bricks had to go back into the basket; Nurse held the basket out; without a murmur, he put in the bricks; "There's a good boy," she said, when the last one was in. The word "naughty" is applied, then, to one group of his actions, alas! a very large group; "good" to another group. When any one calls him "naughty," they show their disapproval, their tone is sharp, perhaps they frown; when they say "good," they seem pleased, their tone is softer and their faces smiling. To begin with, as we have already seen, the child had no idea that there was any difference between his actions, that some would be pleasing, others displeasing to those grown-up people around; he simply followed his impulses, because he felt the desire within him, independently of results. Now he knows differently, and he modifies his actions accordingly. In some moods, he desires to please, and wants to be what Nurse calls "good"; so he does what she tells him—leaves the coal-scuttle alone at her first reminder, avoids those tempting puddles, and is altogether a "well-behaved" boy. But, at other times, he longs to be "contrary"; knowing it to be "naughty," he follows his own



inclinations, dawdles behind when out for his walk, starts to run across the road contrary to order, and screams when sat up in the mail-cart. He knows "bad" from "good," and according to his mood, according to whether he feels in or out of touch with the person in authority, he desires to be the one or the other.

And all the time he is learning, making fresh discoveries. The same amount of approval or disapproval is not accorded, he finds, to all his different actions. Some are good, some "very good," sometimes he delights these grown-up people with something which seems to be a special act of virtue, generally something which he found it hard to do. Some actions are "bad," some "very bad," some "shocking" or "wicked"; generally a severer punishment waits on these last offences. He is a good boy at meals, for instance, if he does not talk too much, sits still and keeps his feeder clean; "naughty" if he does the opposite; but if, out of sheer mischief, he upsets his soup over the table, he is called "very naughty". When he gives up his indiarubber horse to Baby, though it is helping the big cart horse to put the coals in the shed, he is a "very good" boy. It is hard to do it, and Nurse's approval is a comfort to him. Then, the other day, he tore his picture book, his best picture book, which he had himself taken from the shelf, although he knew he was not allowed to do so. Nurse found the torn page, and asked him about it. He tried not to look at her while she waited for his answer, he wanted so badly to say he "didn't know," but somehow he couldn't, with Nurse looking so kindly at him. Still she waited, and at last, with a big effort, he confessed his fault. Nurse then put her arms around him; "Bravo, Sonnie," he heard her say in such a proud, glad voice, "I am glad you told me. You mustn't do it again, but this time I shall not punish you, for you have told the truth." "Telling the truth"—that, then, is the best action of all. *Gradually he begins to realize that there is a standard, (whether "moral" or merely "customary" is at present alike to him), by which he must needs test himself, whatever he does.*

But while, through his varied experiences, his efforts and his failures to do the right, his consciousness of the pleasure and pain he gives by so doing, he forms his moral scale—good, better, best, bad, worse, worst—a new and deeper conscious-



ness of the meaning of all these distinctions dawns within him. Not only are others pleased with him, when he does what he knows he ought to do, but he is glad within himself, is glad when he does right, even if no one is by to see. Not only are others vexed with him when he does wrong, but he is sometimes sad himself about it, and if no one can find out any other way, he tells of himself, in order that he may receive the forgiveness he longs for. Everything which grown-up people call "good" or "bad" does not make him feel like this; it only happens sometimes. For instance, he has been told by Nurse that he must put his toys away in the cupboard overnight, otherwise, the next day, he will have to do without them. One night, when tucked up in bed, he remembers that he has left some soldiers on the floor in the corner. He is sorry—but not because he is conscious of wrong-doing. If he were sure Nurse would not find those soldiers and take them away, he would not mind in the least! It is only the probable loss of the soldiers which is bothering him. But, another night, he remembers that at tea-time he had told Nurse a "lie". While she was out of the room, he had taken a piece of sugar; somehow she had guessed it and asked him; and he had said "No". She had believed him, and it was all right. He hadn't troubled about it again, till Nurse had heard his prayers and said "Good-night". Then he began to feel "a horrid pain inside" and the pain wouldn't go. At last, he had to call to Nurse and confess; and then, and not till then, was he able to drop happily to sleep. The child himself could not explain why he should feel differently in the two cases; yet he is convinced that there is a difference between these two actions. *Some things, he learns, are right or wrong independently of external authority, others right or wrong merely because they are ordered by some one in authority. Some actions constitute mere good behaviour, others are part of good conduct. The ultimate sanction for right or wrong conduct he finds within himself, in his self approval or disapproval, rather than in the approval or disapproval of others. This ultimate sanction, of which he is now conscious, is bound up with his moral and religious development.*

Were it not for this inner sanction, which grows clearer as he grows stronger and wiser, the child would surely at times be tempted to regard goodness and badness as mere conventions



dependent upon the will of grown-up people, so indiscriminating often is the praise or blame accorded to him. One day he was having a grand romp after breakfast, Nurse smiled and seemed to share in the fun. An hour later he was making the same noise, and because he didn't stop the minute he was told, she was very vexed. Baby, it happened, was at that moment dropping to sleep; he had not realized the fact; "good" one minute had apparently become "naughty" the next. Yesterday morning, as Nurse sewed, he pelted her with questions; she answered them, laughed, and told him "he was a sharp little lad, and in time would be a clever man like his father". To-day when he questioned her, she just said, "Don't bother," and when, in spite of rebuffs, he kept on, she told him to go back to his game and not be "naughty". She was tired after a wakeful night with Baby; that, he did not know. When his aunt came to see him, he asked her if she had brought him chocolates, she smiled and told him to feel in her pockets and see; but after she had gone, Nurse had scolded him for being rude! Apparently it merits more disapproval to fall down on a wet and muddy Sunday than on a wet and muddy Monday: strange though it may seem to the child! At times, this is all so puzzling.. Different people have such different standards by which they judge him; even the same person does not seem to have the same standard from one day to another. It is a slow process, bringing moral order out of this chaos, and the child needs our help.

*Even in matters of behaviour, he should not be expected to obey everybody, and those in authority should strive to maintain a uniform standard.* Better persistent "spoiling," than discipline one day and an absence of discipline the next. He can adjust himself to a standard which is permanent, not to one that varies. Laws of behaviour, laws of conduct, should be few, unvarying, plain and comprehensive. *Vague fault-finding should be avoided.* It would perhaps be well if we ruled the word "naughty" out of our vocabulary; it is so often used when the child himself can have no consciousness of wrong-doing. If we have to specify the fault, we should first observe carefully where the fault lies, and occasionally—maybe often—we should find that the fault lies with us, instead of with the child. Only if our own standard of right and wrong is clear and definite, based



upon the moral law, can we expect the child to gain the knowledge, which is, after all, the necessary foundation of moral judgment.

## 2. THE GROWTH OF RIGHT DESIRE.

It is not enough, however, merely to know what is right; the motive force of desire is that which turns the will into right channels. How can we cultivate right desires?

The baby lies in his cradle. As we bend over him, he holds out his little arms to love and to be loved. Gladly we respond to his wishes, and whenever we pass the cradle, he comes to look for some caress, which we never fail to give. We satisfy his instinctive longing for affection, and the longing grows.

Bath-time is over, and, warm and comfortable, we lay him down for sleep. He cries and frets, asking for attention. When we go near him to see that he is comfortable and he feels our touch, he is quiet; when we move away, he cries more lustily than before. All he wants is our presence to hush or pet him to sleep. We pay no attention. Night after night the same thing may happen, but his desires meet with no response, and he ceases to ask.

In a few years' time, he will no longer care to play with his indiarubber horse, his rattle or his ball; he is fretful and mischievous if no other toys are at hand; he wants to *make* things, not merely to play. Bricks satisfy him; bricks, which can be turned into animals, houses or engines; bricks, which he can pile one on top of the other, until they fall. His desire is right and natural; the old toys are put away; new ones are got. And when the bricks cease to satisfy his creative instincts—wood, hammer and nails; clay, pencil, brush and paper, are given to him. His desire to create is good; we try to satisfy him; and both desire and capacity grow through use.

But the lad is overmasterful. When Nurse or Mother offend him, he fights for what he wants; when he wishes for a toy with which the others are playing, he takes it by force; he shows a desire to bully, to domineer. For this he is punished. He has to learn to consider the others, to control his own feelings, in certain matters to do "as he is bid". He is not allowed to shape these unsocial desires in action; through



want of use, they loosen their hold upon him. Not only so, but we deliberately provide opportunities for the exercise of his opposite and social impulses, should these be weak. We get him animal pets to care for, we interest him in other children less happily placed than himself, we win him over into feeling the joy of service for others by making him a privileged helper in the house. The desire to share, to help, was weak to begin with; through exercise it grows.

But, in spite of our encouragement of some, and discouragement of other, tendencies in his nature, the desire for right doing is still fitful and uncertain, dependent on mood, on physical health, on the urgency of those personal desires which so often clash with higher desires. This is but natural, and the remedy lies in supplementing the child's wayward will by our stronger will.

The children are playing in the nursery. Peggy is tired of her game. "Do play with me a bit, John," she begs. But John is still keenly interested in what he is doing, and does not want to stop. "Come here, dearie," says Mother, "I can put my work aside for a bit and play with you." John hears, he knows his Mother is busy. He had a bit of the feeling that he ought to play with Peggy when she first asked him, and when he hears his Mother offer to play with her, it makes him wish that he had offered first. "No, Mother, don't you stop, I'll play with her," he says—and glad in his Mother's approval, glad in himself for having done the right, for Peggy's sake, he throws himself heartily into a fresh game. The self-control he saw in his Mother made him realize the power of control within himself. Nothing is more readily caught than the spirit of right doing, when the right is done gladly.

Robert had found it hard to do his share in household duties, he grumbled at going messages and hated tidying up after himself, yet he was an affectionate, responsive little lad. Instead of asking him any longer to do little jobs *for* her, his Mother began to ask him to do them *with* her, and found that that was quite a different matter. He helped her make the beds, straighten the rooms, he even dried the dishes. All the while they chatted or sang, asked one another conundrums or told jokes, and the work seemed done in no time. She enjoyed it, consequently he enjoyed it; they were "merry workers together



in this merry charming world". Yet, without knowing it, all the while he was getting to *like* to see the rooms tidy, the beds neat, and the dishes washed and dried and laid in nice, even piles. The desire for order was growing, which would make the actual putting into order no longer felt as drudgery. The love of right doing was being caught from the grown-up person, who herself loved right.

One busy morning, Willie, 5 years old, asked his mother if he could do something to help. "Yes, indeed," was the ready reply, "top and tail those gooseberries for me." He looked at the gooseberries, and he looked at his mother; then, slowly and hesitatingly, he said: "If you *want* me to, I'll do the gooseberries, but I'd much rather be beside you". Work done beside us is not felt as work. When the children are small, we often forget this fact, and overstrain their desire to help by not giving them the chance of helping "in our good company". We think more of the task that needs to be done than of the child who is going to do it; it is the child who needs our first consideration, until he has learnt to know the joy of service as surely as we know it ourselves.

Some children are born good, most have to grow good under the influence of a "compelling environment"—but continual forcing never inspired any one with the love of right doing. Our environment must needs compel by its persuasive power, as the magnet compels the needle. By the constraining influence of love, united to a wise discipline, by the unconscious stimulus of our own example, we gradually modify the children's characters. If our boys are selfish, it is our fault because we have not made them otherwise.

How else is right desire strengthened? By not allowing emotion to run to waste without expressing itself in action. Unless the glow of admiration kindled in the child when he reads tales of bravery and self-sacrifice, when he hears of goodness, or sees goodness in others, is followed by practical acts of morality, the consciousness of emotion makes for weakness rather than strength, for sentimentality rather than power. From the first, the children should be taught that what they admire and love they should strive in little things also to become; that their evening prayer should be in harmony with their daily endeavour.



One point more. We are conscious that we ourselves are less capable of moral effort when we are in impaired health ; it is the same with the child. If he is not as well as usual, he is likely to be less responsive ; an increase in his physical energy helps towards an increase in his moral energy. Late nights and exciting pleasures will make a naturally responsive little person completely unresponsive ; a disordered liver will make him no longer even want to be good. Fresh air, wholesome food, cold baths, long hours of sleep and freedom from undue excitement count for as much—one is often tempted to say for even more—in the growth of right desire than moral influences and moral training. Desire cannot be considered as something apart from the child himself. The love of virtue is bound up with health : *mens sana in corpore sano.*

### 3. THE HABIT OF INTELLIGENT RIGHT ACTION.

But often, although the child *knows* what is right, and *desires* what is right, his longing to satisfy the wish of the moment is so strong within him that he is powerless to resist it.

At school one day, Neville, 6 years old, saw some chocolates lying on one of the other boys' desks, he knew that it was stealing to touch them, he wanted to do what was right, but he loved chocolates, and the temptation proved to be too strong for him.

Janet, when she spent the halfpenny on the water-lily, knew that she was doing wrong, and yet she did it. Momentary desires assert themselves with such force that they outweigh other and higher desires.

Dougald, aged 7, was out with his mother. In his pocket was his precious Saturday's penny. As he was discussing with her whether he should spend or save it, he used the expression "I will". Half jokingly, his mother said, "You *will*, will you, laddie? And what do you mean by '*I will*,' I should like to know?" For a minute the little lad pondered, then he said : "When I just *want* something, it's my wish, but *my will* is what makes me do what is right. I have to use my will against my wish." Then, after a pause, he added : "Sometimes the wish sticks to you so close you can hardly use your will."



"You've got two little things inside you, Joan," he was overheard telling his little sister, the next day, when she had been disobedient. "Nurse can see them and I can see them, they're your will and your wish. Now, when you were playing just now, your wish fought against your will and your wish won. Therefore," added the small preacher, "you did not do right, because your will ought to come before your wish."

With the unconscious insight of the child, he had unwittingly put the problem in a nutshell. The "will" must come before the "wish". *How can the child learn to subordinate the impulse of the moment; to control, if need be, his own desires?*

Before he can walk, he is carried—before he is able to read, we read to him—so, before he is capable of self-control, we, from without, insist that he shall not yield to every momentary impulse. It cannot be otherwise; he has as yet neither the power, the knowledge, nor the desire, to control himself. We must teach him control.

It annoys Sidney, for instance, to put away his toys when he has finished playing with them; he wants immediately to begin some other game; but we insist upon his learning to be tidy. The habit, hard at first, gradually becomes easier; he learns to obey more readily; finally, the question of obedience ceases to enter in; however eager he is to be off for another game, he can *make himself* first put his things in order.

He finds it difficult to stop in the middle of his imaginary train journey to put on his hat and coat, when the others are ready for their walk. It would be out of the question for Nurse and Baby to wait until he desired a change of occupation; there is no question about it, he must stop at once. This, too, at first, he finds hard, and Nurse has to insist upon prompt obedience. Gradually it becomes easier, until she has only to put her head in at the door with the words, "Ready, laddie," and, with hardly a thought for the game he is leaving behind, he runs after her. Every hour of every day he is called upon in some small matter to sacrifice his own wishes, not always, it seems to him, reasonably. Many a time he would not yield, unless some compulsion were put upon him. But as time goes on, and the yielding becomes easier, he realizes, if such be the case, that the demands made upon him are both right and reasonable, that they are made for his good.



In these numberless small details of nursery life, prompt and unquestioning obedience has been exacted from him. *Through such soldierly obedience, he has learnt to subordinate his wishes to the will of others. This represents law and order in the only form in which he is as yet capable of grasping it. But such subjection is only for a time. As soon as he begins to understand the law, and to side with it rather than oppose it, self-control is able to take the place of the control once imposed from without.*

But even while we are insisting upon such prompt obedience, we want to do so in such a manner that the child learns *himself to will rightly* and not merely to conquer his own inclinations in obedience to others. How can this be done? He must realize that, even in this matter of unquestioning obedience, we are directing and controlling his will, not overlooking it. He must come increasingly to see that in yielding to us, he is obeying laws of behaviour and conduct, beyond and above us, which we ourselves obey. We must make him feel that *the only obedience worthy of the name is that of the free man, who chooses to obey because he understands the law.* The forced obedience of the slave, whose business is not to understand, but merely to obey, who dares not disobey from fear of punishment, is unworthy of him.

The child, if he does not yield voluntarily, is at times forced to obey, since the law cannot be overridden; but he must realize that forced obedience is not good and meets with our displeasure. Spontaneous, whole-hearted obedience—self-control—is the ideal which, from the first, we set before him.

Mary has just returned from her walk, she refuses to take off her boots. "Now, Mary, one, two, three," we count briskly. She knows what we mean; at "one," she sits down and begins to undo her laces. "Bravo," we say, and mentally give thanks for the numerals! She had yielded quickly, that was good. To yield at all within the time limit would have merited praise, but the quicker, the better. If "three" had been said before Mary began to obey, she would have had to sit alone in her bedroom for a few minutes to ponder awhile on the desirability of prompt obedience! Delay or arguing over the necessity for changing boots would have been out of place; the habit of rapidly conquering the inclination to start playing before slippers



are on must be conquered. But even in this small matter, the child has learnt that voluntary obedience is the best.

Nancy was nearly 3, she had always been taught not to play close up against the door of the room, she had never asked why. One day, a lady, calling at the house, said to her, in that quick, somewhat agitated way which always tends to rouse a child's curiosity, "Come away from that door, child!" Nancy came away as usual, but with a look of wonderment at the door. The next day she deliberately planted herself beside it, announcing in a determined little voice: "Nancy 'tand by door". "And what does Mother say," said her mother quietly, "when- ever Nancy stands there?" "Mother says, 'Tum away,' and Nancy doesn't," was her reply. For a few minutes her Mother said nothing, for the mite was not naturally rebellious, and in a minute or two might forget her experiment; but there the child stood. There was no other door to the room, there was no way of teaching her why the command had always been given—so her Mother said: "Mother can take Nancy away from the door, but she wants her to come by herself". The little rebel's sole rejoinder was—"And Nancy won't!" "Then Mother must lift her up and put her on a chair." There the mite sat, thinking aloud over her recent experience, "Nancy 'tand by door; Mummy says, No, no, tum away; Nancy not bejent girl, Nancy sit on 'tair"—over and over again, till her little chest heaved and her breath came quickly. At last she understood, she was going to cry with what was probably her first consciousness of having displeased her Mother. Quickly her Mother's arms were round her. "Nancy may come down now," she said; "I know she will be Mother's obedient girl". Nancy had had her lesson; she never again attempted to stand by the door.

The child would learn much from such an experience. She had failed to obey of her own free will; she had found that behind the law there was a power which could oblige her to obey, but that forced obedience was not good.

Through such prompt and unquestioning, though voluntary, obedience, the child learns, then, to control his personal desires, for the sake of the order and the well-being of the society of which he is a member, for the sake of his own well-being. The power of control gained in some directions helps him to gain



control over himself in other directions. When it has become easier to leave his soldiers on the battlefield in order to wash his hands for dinner, it is also easier to let his brother join him in his game, even though he would prefer to play alone. When the children argue about every small order given, and leave toys scattered broadcast, they are more likely also to be quarrelsome. Good desires grow and flourish best in an orderly community.

But all this time, the child has been learning the difference between behaviour and conduct, between those actions which he does because grown-up people wish it, and those actions which he is prompted to do by the higher impulses within him. How is he to gain greater control over his own lower impulses? How far can obedience help him in this?

Ronald, when he was about 3 years old, ceased to desire to be helpful. Before that time, it had been a pleasure to him occasionally to run little messages; now it had become an effort, he was absorbed in his games and refused to do what he was asked. After trying in various ways to influence him, the helpful actions were finally insisted upon. If he was asked to run a message and refused, he had to sit up in a chair until willing to go; consequently, for the sake of returning to the game he had been obliged to leave, he consented to do as he was asked. Frowning he would depart, but once out of the room, out of sight of the occupation which had absorbed him, his ill-feeling left him; and, returning to the nursery with a smile instead of a scowl, he was received with a gracious, "Thank you". Obedience gradually became easier. The joy of service had followed the doing of service, and the love of helping returned.

But we need to remember that games in childhood are intensely absorbing, that it is a big effort to leave them even for a moment—"forcing" can easily be overdone. Over-exercise is not good for a child's moral muscles, so to speak, any more than for his physical muscles. The success of our method depends upon the rightness of our insight.

Maurice and his little sister Ruth were dressing in their mother's bedroom. Ruth was laughing and up to fun, and Mother, without looking, said, in a quick tone, knowing how matters usually stood: "Maurice, don't play with her, get on dressing". It happened that, at that moment, he was not play-



ing. Offended, he answered back rudely. "I am sorry if I made a mistake, Maurice; I apologize," his Mother said; "but even so, you had no right to speak to me as you did, and you must also apologize to me." But he refused, and persisted that it was not his fault that he had been rude, he shouldn't have been blamed for nothing. Off to morning school he went without an apology, still insisting that he was right; at dinner-time he held to the same view. He wanted to argue the case, but his Mother refused to discuss the matter with him, simply stating again that nothing could excuse him for speaking as he had done; as she had done what she could to repair her mistake, so he must repair his. Bedtime came and Maurice was unchanged. An hour later, he called his Mother. "I am sorry," he said, "I knew you were right the first thing this morning, but I was stubborn and I couldn't say it. The words somehow stuck in my throat."

Surely it had been well to insist upon that apology. Her insistence had enabled him to gain greater control over himself, the right desire had once more followed the doing of the action.

Before the child can make himself do what is right, we, by exercising compulsion, can help to make him to do it. Once having done it, he experiences the inward pleasure, which is ever the reward of right doing; and the next time he is faced with a difficulty, he will conquer more easily.

But we are taking a grave responsibility upon ourselves whenever we attempt to insist upon the doing of a moral action, that is, upon what should be the outward expression of an inward feeling.

Frank and Mary were playing at soldiers, and he, forgetting his superior strength, hurt her and made her cry. His Mother, who was watching, said to him: "Say you are sorry, Frank." But he wasn't sorry; to his mind, Mary was a baby to cry. Should she *insist* upon an expression of regret? Ought she, for instance, to send him to his own room, until he was willing to express his sorrow? If so, will he really feel sorry at the end of the time, or perhaps only feel increasingly out of touch with Mary? It is clear that the game will have to stop, unless he is sorry; but is it desirable to insist upon the carrying out of the



letter of the law? Perhaps so, perhaps not. If the fact of having to say he is sorry makes him more careful another time, makes him glad in his heart that he has acted towards her like a "gentleman," it is well that he should be called on, even against his inclination, to obey; but if, for the sake of peace, he only expresses a regret he is still far from feeling, surely it is not well.

Henry and May had quarrelled, she had been rude to him, he had spoken rudely back to her. Their Father heard about it and insisted upon his apologizing. The boy's sense of justice was outraged; he was ready to apologize to her if she had also to apologize to him, but she had begun the quarrel. The justice of the claim, however, did not appeal to his Father; the boy persisted in his refusal and was thrashed. But the punishment only deepened his consciousness of injustice and roused all the pluck and defiance of which he was capable. Repeatedly he was punished, but steadily refused to yield. His Father, finally, had to give up the struggle. The boy refused to say that he was sorry when he was not. His Father's action only aroused for the time a sense of antagonism between the boy's will and his. Had he succeeded, had the boy yielded merely from fear, or for the sake of peace, would it have been well?

"It is a very responsible thing to be 'grown up,' for then we become part of the causation of life." In the insistence on our part on right doing, much insight is needed. *We only help the child to gain self-control when we enable him, by our insistence, to do that which he is afterwards ready to confess he is glad to have done.*

*If right desires are not there, if right is not recognized as right by the child, our insistence is useless, if not actually harmful.* Desire for right and knowledge of right, are needed first.

But if the right desire is there, though obscured for the time; if the child knows the action to be right, though he cannot make himself confess it; if "his wish sticks so close to him that he cannot use his will"; our quiet insistence helps him to become morally stronger. In the conflict between right and wrong, we, by our demands, keep the battle going until the enemy has been defeated. The very fact of winning in the end strengthens the child's right impulses, and the next time,



the battle is less severe. When the crisis is over, he has gained in self-control, his will is stronger.

#### 4. THE GAINING OF SELF-MASTERY.

But as his will-power grows in strength through our very insistence upon right-doing, he gradually gains a juster appreciation of what is right, and why it is right. The sense of inner satisfaction, which follows upon right doing, helps him consciously to side with the moral law. This inner consciousness of what he knows to be right, which we speak of as his Conscience, takes our place as judge over his actions.

"Sometimes," said Lewis, "I feel as if a kind of fight is going on inside me, when I want to do something so badly and my thought about what is right won't let me."

Ernest was 8 years old, and Mark was 6. The elder had been given two pears. He had not been told to share them with his brother, and his impulse was to slip away by himself to a secluded spot and eat both! He did not know that anyone was looking. He stood with the pears in his hand, his mouth watering with anticipation, gazing at them! At last, with a glad smile on his face, he ran back to Mark and held out to him the larger of the two pears.

It was Sunday tea-time. The cake had been cut unskillfully, and one slice was a good bit bigger than all the rest. One after another, the children helped themselves to cake, each, without comment, leaving the large slice, until only three pieces were left on the plate—two smaller, one large—for Mother and the two youngest children. Humphrey, 8 years old, with a longing eye, took the small piece; May, aged 7, took the larger.

What made Humphrey conquer his selfish impulses and May yield to hers? Both had been brought up to believe that "it was not the right thing to be selfish". May did not yet feel the claim of the moral law, Humphrey did. This claim is only felt when the higher impulses in the child's nature have grown strong and stable; when he has learnt by practice habitually to overcome the lower; when, as the result of his experience, he is only happy when he does what he knows to be right; and response to this claim is again dependent on the strength



of those higher impulses. Self-mastery is achieved, when the child loves the right and is unhappy if he does wrong.

This power of self-mastery can be won in many and varied ways. For instance, Maurice, aged 10, hated "to be ruled". To be told what to do made him immediately want not to do it! But the right had to be done, and the only way to avoid being told was to do it first. If, of his own free will, he fell into line with the rules at school and at home, such rules would no longer need to be *imposed* upon him. If he could learn to master himself, he would require no other master. For the sake of such independence, he strove for self-control. The word "must" he hated; he learned to obey the word "*ought*".

Ronald gained all-round self-mastery, to a large extent by working hard for a junior scholarship. Naturally passionate and rebellious, impatient in overcoming difficulties, inaccurate and wanting in thoroughness, he was difficult to deal with at home and at school. He lacked self-control, while at the same time he possessed strong impulses, which needed to be kept well in hand. Every day, while he worked for his scholarship, a little bit of careful work had to be done, generally against his will. Subject after subject had to be studied, until each one was brought up to scholarship standard. At first the very regularity of the grind was an effort to him. Gradually he succumbed to that, as part of the inevitable discipline of life, but his heart was not yet in his work. His "wish" tended in one direction, his "will" had to be set in another and contrary direction. He was like a boy training to win the cup of honour at his school sports, training dutifully because those interested in him desired him to win, but all the while keen on something else! But steady faithful work, even against the grain, brings its own reward. He made headway, difficulties vanished as knowledge grew; subjects became more interesting, and, in spite of himself, he began to care for work. Not only did he learn to become a worker at school, but the self-mastery, gained in the one direction, spread in other directions. That morning hour of work, done in spite of the temptation to play cricket or rounders, strengthened his will, so that he was able to resist other temptations. He became more responsive, less impatient, less quarrelsome, more thorough. His self-mastery was acquired by practice: love of work followed the doing of work;



doing of right in other directions, the doing of right in the one direction.

For most children, goodness is not an end in itself. It is goodness in the concrete, not in the abstract, which inspires them. They desire to be like some one whom they love, and to be some one great when they grow up. With their vivid imaginations, their ideals are so real, that they supply the stimulus towards right doing which they need.

Jack was 12 years old, and longed to be a soldier. Soldiers were strong, obedient, fearless and truthful. With this end in view, he set himself a high standard of conduct. One day, for a joke, he and some school friends opened the gates in a field and drove all the sheep out on to the road. When their master heard of it, he questioned all the boys in the school. Jack's younger brother, Dick, was asked if he knew anything about it. He did, but as a matter of course—declared he knew nothing. Then Jack was asked, and at once owned up. Dickie stared at him in wonderment, then whispered: "Jack, why did you say 'Yes'?" "Why? because I did do it," answered Jack, "and if I had said 'No,' Daddy would be sorry—he says soldiers never say 'No' when they have done a wrong thing. When I am a man, I mean to be a soldier."

Donald, too, longed to be a soldier, and only feared lest by the time he grew up—he was 8 years old—everybody would be so fond of everybody else that there would be no more fighting! For the sake of his ideal, he would fight with his big brother, and, when he was hurt, pluckily keep back the tears; when he woke after a bad dream, frightened in the night, he would strive not to call out—acts of self-mastery not easy to a child of that age. Such children have an end in view, an ideal of what they want to be; self-mastery is for them worth while.

Not mastery by others, however high the standard which they set, but self-mastery is the goal at which we should aim. Unless, by our insistence, we are helping the child to control himself, so that, as the years pass, we need to exercise ever a lesser control, we have not trained him rightly, however right his actions done under our direction may be. As he comes to understand the right, to care for the right and to be capable of self-control, we should cease to exercise authority over him.

Our part is to interpret to him the experience of life so that



he increasingly understands, to place him in such an environment, to show him such examples, that he increasingly cares, and only to insist, in such matters and in such a way, that he may learn self-control. And all the while our interpretation of life, our temporary insistence on right doing, our choice of the influences to which he shall be subject, must be based upon a reasoning insight into the special tendencies of his nature.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PLACE OF PUNISHMENT IN EDUCATION.<sup>1</sup>

Punishment of wrong-doing secondary in importance to encouragement of right-doing—Punishment is not merely suffering, which has to be endured to atone for a wrong done, it should serve also as a preventive of further wrong-doing, for the object of punishment is the training of character—Need for careful discrimination and tact in the details of punishment, in order that they may be infrequent and at the same time effective—Moreover, even by means of our punishments, we should be drawn into a closer and more understanding relationship with the child—Canons of punishment—The value of corporal punishment, a debated question—Need for understanding and deliberation, for self-control on our part, in dealing with childish "sins".

I HAVE frequently referred in previous chapters to the question of punishment. Without the use of punishment in some degree, however slight, it would be impossible to train most children. We shall now consider the subject in greater detail. In the first place, therefore, we will inquire what punishment is, and we can go on to consider the special forms which it takes, and their right and wrong use.

Punishment is essentially the application of superior force, violent or otherwise, used to secure the submission of the weaker to the stronger will. In its earlier forms among social communities, it is hardly distinguishable from revenge, when the stronger will expresses its intolerance of opposition of any kind on the part of the weaker. Such intolerance of opposition is frequently seen in many people even to-day; we can detect, in the voice of the grown-up person in charge of the

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter I am much indebted to Professor McCunn, from whose book I have gratefully borrowed much. I have come across no book as helpful and suggestive as his. Many of the questions, lightly touched on in this chapter, will be found treated in full in his chapter on Punishment.



child, what Emerson calls "the lust of power". This the rational child naturally resents. He resents the assertion of our personal will as such, and he resents it the more the greater his capacity for self-government, and the higher his ideals of right and wrong. Authority assumes its highest form when it arranges that each individual shall grow up with the least possible restriction, so as to be enabled to exhibit the freest play of all his good faculties. Restrictions in the way of punishments should be extremely slight. The highest function of the mother or teacher is to allow the freest possible expansion of activity and conduct compatible with the rights of others.

But, this recognition of the rights of children to some degree of independence, which is characteristic of the present age, has certainly in many homes been carried too far. Children are not perfected citizens; they have not yet been trained to become self-regulative. And in the home, as in the State, liberty may degenerate into licence. Although, therefore, it is necessary to let the energies and activities of childhood express themselves as freely and unconstrainedly as possible, yet, as educators of children, we fail in our duty, when we allow such liberty to surpass the limits of justifiable conduct and become injurious. This is the place where punishment is needed.

We must then inquire what is the place of punishment in discipline? What is its object? What should be the nature of punishment, and what results it may be expected to secure?

#### THE PLACE OF PUNISHMENT.

The place of punishment of wrong-doing is secondary in importance to that of encouragement in right-doing. Punishment emphasizes the fault, and if the fault be unduly emphasized, the nature of the child may be warped in consequence. In a book entitled, "The Children of the Future," by Miss Nora Smith, she tells the story of a thoughtful child, who, when he saw a crooked and deformed tree one day in the garden, remarked that he "s'posed somebody must have stepped upon it when it was a little fellow". The application of the story is clear. "Not trees alone are bent and twisted in their growing by carelessness and ignorance," writes Miss Smith, "every child differs from every other child, . . . and not until this is under-



stood, and training is given to suit the particular case, can we be sure that the budding human life will not be killed, bent or stunted by misapplied force." Training implies repression by means of punishment, but it also implies development. Training must imply the weakening of wrong impulses and the prevention of wrong-doing by punishment, but it also implies, and this is the more important part, the deliberate cultivation and strengthening of right impulses and right actions. Moreover, as I have already said, development and repression are not two things but one; "all genuine development already carries in it repression of much. . . . If once heart and mind are filled with strong positive instincts, the rest will come of itself. . . . It is not enough simply to check the bad desire, rather we must seek, till we find and can foster, some other desire, in the presence of which it may find it hard to live."

This is the point on which I have again and again laid stress. Granted that the child is troublesome, granted that he tends to be selfish, disobedient, even cruel, we may apparently cure him of these faults by punishment, but punishment alone will never develop in him a tender, unselfish character. Punishment, if effective, can only prevent the doing of the wrong action, it cannot create the right feeling.

Occasionally it does seem as if punishment had done much more. Frank, when he was 6, had for a while been away from home and on his return suffered severely from "swollen head". There was no managing him in the nursery. For a fortnight, life with him was endured by the nurse and the other children; it is difficult to find a word strong enough to describe the pitch of his lawlessness and even rudeness. Various plans were tried to reduce this small sinner to order. At last his mother threatened him with a whipping. For two days she was full of anxiety, dreading the punishment for him, and with the lad, things were better. Then the old behaviour began again. Frank was properly whipped. The whole atmosphere of the house was different afterwards; it was as if the child had before been possessed by a devil, now angels came and dwelt in him! At home, it was the last whipping he needed for more than a year.

Punishment had produced an effect which, from the outside, looked like moral conversion. Moral conversion it cannot be



Pain cannot turn the child from an enjoyment of wrong-doing to a love of right. What had happened was that the better instincts in his nature—better instincts which were undoubtedly there—did not show themselves in action, because other and bad instincts blocked their path. The result of the punishment was therefore moral emancipation, not moral conversion. Effective punishment prevented any further expression of such wrong instincts in action, and thus gave an opportunity for the exhibition of the child's naturally good instincts. The punishment resulted in a new and altered life; it made the child, as it were, "pull himself up". Punishment, as I have said, prevents wrong-doing, but it cannot create a love of right. The value of punishment, as far as its effects on character are concerned, depends on the independent strength and worth of the good tendencies, which are left free to develop when wrong ones are checked. Punishment does not nurture the good tendencies; it only gives them free play, when they are already possessed by the child.

*Children should be educated from the beginning so as to avoid the necessity of much punishment.* But I do not believe that, in the case of the majority of children, punishment can be entirely dispensed with. Some actions cannot wisely be permitted to pass unpunished; obedience, if not voluntarily given, must ultimately be insisted upon, and such insistence will involve the use of some kind of punishment.

Nevertheless, *in the development of character, punishments are of secondary importance only.* The first place is taken by such opportunities as we can find to develop the good desires, in the presence of which bad ones cannot live, and this is true from babyhood upwards.

A small child is bent on playing with the coal; we do not merely say "No, no"; we do not expect him to keep away from the delight of the coal-box, if he has no other toys at hand; we substitute some other interest.

An older child perhaps tends to be selfish. We do not blame him overmuch because of it. We get him to help us on every possible occasion, and on such occasions reward him by showing special signs of gladness. We rouse his sympathy by telling him of some poor child, and when we have kindled his emotions, we let him find some toy which he would like to give



away. We get him, if possible, some pet to care for. That is, in every way we foster in him the impulse of sympathy, of unselfishness, and the selfish impulses gradually weaken in his nature.

Another child dawdles over everything. We may scold and scold, and yet he does not cease to dawdle. We try some other method. We time him when he runs a message, and congratulate him when he is quick. We make much even of a slight improvement. We practise him in running small messages briskly and accurately. By scolding, the fault is emphasized; we cultivate the opposite virtue.

Moreover, in minor matters, we can do a great deal in the direction of avoiding the need of punishment by anticipating wrong-doing, and therefore somehow surely preventing its occurrence. We may notice, for instance, that Evelyn (4 years) is on the point of becoming irritable and quarrelsome with the other children. We watch, and observe that, for some reason or other, she finds it very hard to control herself. We therefore act promptly. In our own mind, we decide quickly whether we need to take any measure as summary as extra rest in bed or not. If our judgment says "bed," then we use our tact in getting her to bed, as a treat and not as a punishment, for she has not *yet* been naughty. If we think that bed is not needed, only change of surroundings and occupation, we find some pleasurable message or task elsewhere for her to do.

I know that it is not always practicable to anticipate wrong-doing, but it frequently is so, and we are more likely to succeed if we are on the look-out. Miss Harrison, in her book "The Study of Child-Nature," tells a story, which illustrates what I mean. A small child, a new-comer at her school, was "the most complete embodiment of negative training" she had ever come in contact with. "No, I don't want to play," "No, I won't sit by that boy," "No, I don't like these blocks"; it was always "No," no one pleased him, nothing satisfied him. "I saw," Miss Harrison says, "that the child needed more than anything else positive encouragement, to be led into a spirit of participation with the others. The third day after his arrival, another child chanced to bring a small pewter soldier to the kindergarten. As is usual with each little treasure brought from home, it was examined and admired, and at play-time the child, who brought



it, was allowed to choose a game. This last privilege brought to the new boy's face a look of contempt, which sharply contrasted with the happy, sympathetic faces of the other children. Soon after we had taken our places at the work-tables, with the toy soldier standing erect in front of little Paul, I heard a whizzing sound, and Paul's voice crying out: 'Joseph has knocked my soldier off the table, and he did it on purpose too'. I turned to the scene of disaster; the soldier lay on the other side of the room, and Joseph, the iconoclastic invader into our realm of peace, with defiance in his face, sat looking at me. My first impulse was to say, 'Why did you do that? It was naughty; go and pick up the soldier'. That, however, would have been another negation added to the number which had already been daily heaped upon him. He had done one wrong, could he be forestalled in further wrong-doing? So instead, I said, 'Oh, well, Paul, never mind. Joseph does not know that you try to make each other happy in the kindergarten. Come here, Joseph, I want you to be my messenger-boy.' The rôle of messenger-boy, or helper, to distribute the work, is always a much-coveted office, partly from an inborn delight in children to assist in the work of older people, partly from the distinction which arises from the imaginary wearing of the brass buttons and gilt band. As if expecting some hidden censure, Joseph came a little reluctantly to where I was sitting. In a few minutes he was busy running back and forth, giving to each child the envelope containing the work of the next half-hour. As soon as the joy of service had melted him into a mood of comradeship, I whispered, 'Run over now and get Paul's soldier'. Instantly he ran across the room, picked up the toy, and placing it on the table before its rightful owner, quietly slipped into his own place and began his work. His whole nature for the time being was changed into good-humoured fellowship with all mankind."

*Punishment may be needed occasionally as a repressing influence; but repression of wrong-doing can at times be best accomplished by the encouragement of right-doing. If we fill the heart and mind with strong positive impulses, if we see that goodness always reaps the true reward of goodness in the love and approval of those whom the child loves, the rest will come of itself. Beyond all else, we must see that our own standard*



of character is high. "The best way," wrote Plato in his "Laws," "of training the young, is to train yourself at the same time; not to admonish them, but to be always carrying out your own principles in practice."

Whatever be the age of the child, punishment is not merely suffering which has to be endured to atone for wrong-doing, it should be a preventive of further wrong-doing, and punishment fails if it does not tend at any rate to prevent the recurrence of the fault punished. This is often lost sight of in practice. The child is punished without regard to the future, solely because he has on that particular occasion been naughty or troublesome.

Sometimes he has not really been naughty, he has only seemed so to the person in charge, and the so-called naughtiness could not have been known to be such by the child himself. Examples of this constantly occur in our every-day experience. Our mind is otherwise occupied, the child keeps on talking or asking questions. We find him worrying, judge him naughty, and in some way punish him—but he only seemed naughty to us, because we were not giving him our attention—much as we must often seem naughty to him! What is in reality the mere overflow of spirits is often punished, as if it were wrong-doing. We need always to think why we are punishing before we punish, or even threaten the punishment. Suppose a child was allowed to go into his Father's library where he gave him books to look at. The child had never been told not to go in alone, and one day, while his Father was out, went in and got books for himself. In a little while his Father returned, and found him enjoying some rare and valuable books which had been left on the table. His anxiety was great. He felt angry, and, without looking to see whether they were injured, he told the child that he was very naughty to come in and help himself to the books, and he must never come into the library again. You can understand it from the Father's point of view—damage might have been done which could never have been repaired. He felt afraid to trust the child in the place again—but what of the child's point of view? He did not, and could not, know the value of the books, he did not see what wrong he had done. It must have seemed unjust to him, and so it undoubtedly was.

Our business is to train the child in good conduct, and our



task, therefore, is to satisfy ourselves in what way the arbitrary administration of punishment can effect the changes in character we desire to bring about. The nature and extent of punishment should be judged from this standpoint.

Why do we lay such stress on character and conduct rather than on behaviour? Because the child must be able to outgrow authority; he must gradually become a self-directing agent, governed by his own impulse towards right. The soldier in a regiment continues to be in subjection to his superior officer; the child must, so to speak, become his own superior officer. This distinction is an important one. In a regiment of soldiers, all of whom have to obey an external command when given, the object of punishment is to secure discipline, and therefore community of behaviour, whatever conditions may arise.<sup>1</sup> But in a home the object of punishment is not merely to secure discipline, but rather to see that good behaviour springs from right motives in order that the child, as he grows older, may be relied on to do what is right under different circumstances. As long as the soldiers move in a compact mass, it is necessary for their preservation as a body, and for their efficiency as a force, that they should act immediately and simultaneously in response to the word of command. But, even among soldiers, such a method of rigid discipline has its drawbacks. When they are spread out into open order and sent to procure information, to act as scouts or to obtain fodder, etc., individual observation, judgment and self-direction are needed; and many an army has been lost because troops who had been so trained as to be capable of doing the one, were not capable of carrying out the other. Nevertheless, it was community of action which, in the army, was the essential thing. In the home, though it is not only desirable, but necessary at times, to be able to obtain this community of action, this instantaneous unquestioning obedience of the soldier, yet this is not the primary matter, as the child begins to develop. Though there is a stage in the child's life in which we want to secure the community of action that is characteristic of a regiment of soldiers, though we wish all along to produce a citizen who is capable of working in harmony with other citizens, yet,

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to read "Emerald Uthwart" ("Miscellaneous Studies," Pater) in this connexion.



for most of the affairs of life, individual judgment and self-direction will be needed, and even when, in a civilized state, community of action among citizens is necessary, this can only with certainty be relied upon where each individual member yields a co-operation which is willing and intelligent.

We are led back then to the same point; that is, that the object of discipline, or punishment, is the training of character. In securing discipline, by means of encouragement, or by repression such as punishment, we must always remember that outward conformity of action, or behaviour, strictly so-called, must never be our ultimate, but only our immediate, aim. Our ultimate aim must be to include, with the habit of right action, the growth and development of the faculties of judgment, feeling and sympathy. Punishments must be of such a nature that the child is aided, not merely in the doing of the right, but in the knowledge and love of right, in the hatred of wrong, and, at the same time, they must help him to grow into a closer and more understanding relationship with those in whom the power to punish is vested.

Unless we can, even by means of our punishments, grow into closer communion with the children, we shall be at a loss in dealing with them when graver offences are committed. The main element in dealing with such offences, making them in the eyes of the child different from other and minor offences, should be our disapprobation, and the pain felt by us at the wrong-doing. The winning of confidence and understanding is not an easy matter. "It is an art of many resources—of patient affection, of habitual kindness in little things, of ready and sincere sympathy with youthful plans and projects, of firm and tolerant guidance in graver matters," and, may I not add, of careful discrimination and much tact in the matter of punishment.

#### THE NATURE OF PUNISHMENT.

What then must be the nature and extent of the punishments which we should give?

1. Punishment must not only be just, but must appear just to the child; therefore he should know beforehand, as far as possible, that a particular punishment will follow a particular offence. What follows from this? Surely, that any offence



committed by a small child for the first time should not be punished, but only met with a warning that, if such a thing is done again, the child will have to suffer, the threat being carried out invariably. It is true that Nature does not always threaten. Fire burns the *first* time the child puts his hand into it; and there are some things in nursery life which must be punished the first time they occur, not so much because they are morally wrong, as because we dare not run the risk of the child's doing them a second time. This would be the case, for instance, when he does anything which is actually dangerous to himself or those about him. But, in general, we can afford to let the first offence pass. Unless there is moral obliquity at the back of the offence, it is not right to punish; if there is such obliquity, it is sure to find another outlet and then we can punish suitably.

2. Punishment must be given calmly and deliberately, and not in anger, and it must be effective, that is, it must serve to prevent the recurrence of the wrong-doing. There is no doubt that if we habitually punish only when we have given the child previous warning, and on no other occasion, our punishment will gain in effectiveness and lose any element of vexation. We are not tempted to be angry, and this adds to the effectiveness of our punishment; while the further fact, that we can ourselves see that we are going the right way to work to gain our end, helps us to rule with greater calmness.

3. Punishment must never alienate the child from us or us from the child; it must be such as to increase his sense of confidence in us. He must, therefore, understand why we punish, he must feel that our dealings with him are just and loving.

4. Punishment should help the child to realize why the particular action was wrong, and what is the right. It therefore helps to train his judgment. At times the punishment should be such as to make clear to him the nature of his offence, so as to help him to build up his own moral code. He has to be led gradually from an unconscious, to a conscious, choice of lines of conduct. How can he learn to choose unless he gains understanding?

5. Punishment must further help to train the child's love of right. It must therefore be accompanied by a belief on our part in his goodness. It must be moderated by sympathy, and



planned with insight into the child's nature. We must get him somehow, by means of our punishment, to be on the side of right, and, whenever possible, see that the wrong-doing is repaired. He must understand that we hate to punish. If the punishment is resented, we may take it as a danger signal that, somehow or other, we are going the wrong way to work.

6.<sup>1</sup> "Punishment must be certain. Punishment must be speedy. Severity without this is always useless, with it almost needless—a bungler's attempt to make up for want of power and influence." Punishment must accomplish its end with the minimum of suffering.

7.<sup>1</sup> "The better the school, or the better the individual master, the less will punishment be needed," and (similarly) the better managed the home, the less will punishment be needed in that home. For a good nurse or parent, like a good master, "prevents misdemeanour and makes system," and "personal character and personal labour act instead of external force".

8. Lastly, we must adapt our punishments to each particular child. There are no specific punishments warranted to cure specific faults. Each child is different from every other. General laws can be applied to special cases, but they can only be rightly applied after faithful and loving study of the children themselves.

We must then make the punishment fit the criminal, so to speak, rather than the crime. We must never punish unless it is necessary. Wrong-doing may be forestalled; at times, it may even advisedly be passed by. The object of punishment is moral discipline, and it must be remembered that there is such a thing as "moral discipline through pity and forgiveness". "All education," Guyau writes, "should be directed to this end, to convince the child that he is capable of good and incapable of evil, in order to render him actually so." Undue stress should not be laid on punishments. They should play but a small part in the drama of a child's life; little tragedies of one kind and another there must and will be in childhood—but we should see, as far as we are concerned, that—by the influence of love and tact, by our own example unconsciously affecting the child,

<sup>1</sup>The quotations are from Thring, the great educational reformer. His canons of punishment are quoted by Professor McCunn.



by our method of winning him to a love of goodness, by our care for his health, since we cannot expect a healthy mind without a healthy body—his life is, for the most part, a happy comedy, and punishments few and far between. The frequent use of so-called "natural" punishments, of suiting the punishment to the special offence, tends to exaggerate a child's small faults. We do not want him to look forward too much, to realize unduly the results of his actions. The eyes of the child are fixed on the objects for which he is striving rather than on the pleasures or pains which may result from the strife. It is better so. We may overestimate, as Professor McCunn points out, the gain of foresight of consequences in childhood. "There is a wiser and more sympathetic way"—the same thought is reiterated in his book—"it is to seek out and to find the promising instincts, the healthy proclivities, the forward struggling tendencies, and by all means in our power to feed and foster them, so that the child may be emboldened to give them play with something of a buoyant and uncalculating confidence. . . . Encourage those who fall to rise and struggle forward, to rally the good that is in them, and, even to the limits of pious fraud, to convince them that they are capable of better things. The wrong-doer is sick in spirit, he must be brought back to health." <sup>1</sup>

Let us then consider a few typical instances in home life in which punishment was given, and, by examining them, test these canons of punishment which have been laid down.

Baby Joan, 15 months old, is sitting up at the table, playing with her toys. She begins throwing them on the floor, requesting us again and again to pick them up. More than once we pick up the toys and return them. But the game goes on, and though we say "No, no," she persists in throwing them down, and demands that they should be given back. What steps should we take? It is possible that we might have forestalled this disobedience on her part by seeing earlier, either that she was tiring of the particular toys we had given her to play with, or had tired altogether of sitting up at the table. But suppose we had not done this, and now needed to teach her a lesson in obedience. The simplest plan would be to

<sup>1</sup> Ch. II., part ii. "The Making of Character," p. 69.



leave the toys lying on the floor for a while, so that she wearied of having thrown them down. Such a punishment she would understand, and she need only be kept just long enough without toys to learn her lesson.

Suppose, again, that Joan is bent on climbing in her high chair with the risk of falling and hurting herself. Again, I should say that such a tendency to climb is so natural and inevitable, that, directly she becomes strong enough to be up to such tricks, we should fasten her in her chair in such a way that climbing is impossible. Then, if she still tried to risk her limbs in the effort, very gently we might move the chair, until she felt in an unsafe position, and was sufficiently frightened for a while not to run the risk of a fall again—move her very gently, roughly would lessen her feeling of confidence in us, and would frighten her more than there was any need, or any right, to do. In both cases, we should first warn her, then quietly carry the warning into effect, so gently, that even the baby may not doubt the love behind the punishment—but the punishment must be effective.

John, 6 years old, is bent on destroying his toys, partly may be from sheer carelessness, partly because he wants to see how they are made—the natural result of his constructive, creative instinct. Such destructiveness cannot be permitted. We watch him, and observe that the spirit of inquiry within him is demanding further outlet. We therefore see that bricks, bits of wood, tools, etc., are ready to his hand. Then we warn him that if he is rough with any toy, that toy will at once be put away. It is the natural punishment for rough usage; it therefore appeals to his sense of justice, trains his judgment. It is effective, and undoubtedly involves a minimum of suffering.

Jim, aged 2½, has a habit, very trying to every one, of striking out at them when anything occurs which he does not like; a frequent habit just at that phase of a boy's life, when he is passing out of babyhood into the beginning of boyhood. Such a habit is very trying to the patience of those in charge, and, without such a view of punishment as the one we are discussing, they would perhaps naturally regard him as very naughty, punishing him, by some means, because he is so naughty and feeling angry with him at the same time. Yet, after all, it is so natural that a strong-willed boy like Jim should



object to have his self-will interfered with by other people; so natural that he should use the power that he feels in him to hit and kick, and try by some means to get his own way; so natural that the sense of antagonism should develop—after all, it means a sense of power in him, which later he can turn to good advantage. There is nothing wrong in his growing consciousness of self-will which is the cause of the difficulty, in rightful directions it can be used to the utmost. He can be encouraged, for instance, to make suggestions, thwarted as little as possible, so that he may feel the joy of using his own will and his strength of muscle rightfully; but the habit of fierce rebellion, mite though he is, is a serious matter, and must be stopped at once before its hold on him grows stronger. His nurse, if she is driven to it, must, then, invent some punishment which she can conveniently use on every occasion when Jim hits out; not a severe punishment, for there is not much moral obliquity at the back of the fault, but yet an effective one; not in this case a slap back, since the punishment would then resemble the offence too closely to be desirable. The punishment, moreover, must be one which will appeal to Jim's dawning sense of justice and self-knowledge, such as the tying together, for a while, of his hands. This punishment is not severe, but it is irksome. All the time he is troubled by his loss of freedom, he is made to realize, through the tied hands, that he has used them wrongly, and needs to control them in the future; they are not meant to hurt with, but for work and play. When they have been tied long enough to be a real punishment—(how long one cannot say, two or three minutes might be enough, or twenty might be necessary, the length of time can only be judged by experience in dealing with the particular child)—if he is really sorry, they can be freed, with a word of warning that the same punishment will be repeated whenever necessary—a word not more—it never answers to allow ourselves to indulge in what the boys call "jaw".

Now, although we need to be able to drop any punishment which we can see is not helping us to gain our end, we need also to be sure that we *do* repeat the punishment every time, till we have tried the experiment long enough to decide whether it is, or is not, a success. I have known such a punishment tried successfully with more than one child. But some children,



at first, almost enjoy the novelty of a new and not painful punishment of this kind, and only when the newness wears off, does it begin to tell. It stands to reason that every normal child would object to such a restriction of his liberty, if it were somewhat prolonged. Such a punishment can always be used, however awkward the moment, from the point of view of stopping to punish, may be. It is unwise to allow a noisy fuss to be made over the tying. If the child cries or argues, then he must go into a room by himself and suffer doubly; if he prefers to stay in the nursery, then for a while he must submit quietly.

So-called "natural" punishments are at times wondrously effective. Miss Harrison, in her "Study of Child Nature," to which I have already alluded, tells the story of a friend of hers who, on returning home one day, found that her 6-year-old boy had taken his younger brother to the wagon shop across the street, and they had smeared their aprons with the wagon grease. "'My first impulse was to whip the boy,' the Mother said, 'because he knew better than to go; but I thought I would try some other way of punishing him, and see if it would do any good.' So I said: 'Why, that's too bad. It will be rather hard for you to get the grease off, but I think I can help you, if you will get some turpentine. Run to the drug store at the corner and buy a small bottle of it.' On his return I had all ready for him, and showed him how to begin cleaning. In a few minutes, he said, 'Mother, this stuff smells horrible.' 'Yes,' I replied, 'I know it does, I dislike the smell of it very much, but I think you will soon get through.' So he kept on scrubbing till he had cleaned the aprons as well as he could. 'Well,' I said, as I helped him to put away the cleaning materials, 'I think you will be more careful about going to that shop another time.' 'You bet I will,' was the emphatic reply."

Such punishments are effective, because they are remembered; they are just, and they do not entail undue suffering. They train the child's judgment, and so do not lessen his sense of trust in us. Children are very just, and have keen insight; they understand, even though they do not always confess it, that we do not want to punish them, when we always punish with obvious reluctance.

As, however, the children grow older, if, in this way, the



punishment were constantly made to "fit the crime," it would often amount to laying undue stress upon the fault. If the children have been trained to do right, while they are babies; wrong-doing, as they grow older, is rare. They may get out of the habit of prompt obedience, at times behave badly at table, forget to wash properly, or come late to meals. But real wrong-doing will be infrequent. Good habits need to be constantly kept up; and some slight, and more or less formal, punishment may be needed as a reminder; nothing more. If such slight punishments are not effective, then some other plan must be followed; but they should be sufficient, if systematically pursued. The difficulty is for us, on our part, to pursue them systematically. Greater punishments are not needed, except very occasionally, in a well-managed school; why should they be needed in a well-managed home? If, from the beginning, we seek out and foster the good and promising instincts, then, as the child grows older, less and less punishment will be required.

A few words in conclusion on the much-debated subject of corporal punishment. For little ones under eighteen months old, with no capacity for reasoning, an occasional tiny slap, when needed, is often the simplest and most effective form of punishment, though even a baby of this age can be warned beforehand. If the slap is given without any feeling of vexation, but deliberately, it has no bad after-consequences, and acts as the straightforward quick deterrent that is needed. The misdemeanours of mites of this age are so trifling, and so free from that element of defiance, which, later on, is so galling to those put in authority—that we are not tempted to be angry with them, and are, therefore, not likely to slap too often or too severely. But even with the baby we should, as soon as possible, adopt some other form of punishment. He will learn more from other punishments; a slap is only a deterrent, nothing more. Besides, unless the child has very little of this kind of thing, he will get used to it, and it will no longer even be effective. Neither will it be effective if it is given when we are vexed; the child—even in babyhood—is a quick observer, he very soon gets to understand that, if we slap when we are vexed, it comes to pretty much the same as his slapping when he is



vexed! He couldn't put his conclusions into so many words, but he feels it to be so, and he is right.

There is much difference of opinion with regard to corporal punishment, after this period of babyhood is over. My own opinion is that, with some children, while they are small, there is no other punishment so satisfactory, if rightly and rarely used. It is quick, and involves, for the eager, restless child, a minimum of suffering. Corporal punishment is sometimes an effective deterrent, when everything else has failed. No punishment can be more harmful, if it is abused. Many people slap too often and too indiscriminately; that is to say, they use the same punishment (either a slap or a whipping), whatever be the nature of the offence—making a noise in bed, sucking hat strings or gloves, striking the nurse, teasing the baby, refusal to come to bed, or, when in bed, to go to sleep! Slapping does not teach the child why any particular action was wrong. It only deters him from wrong-doing, nothing more; and if used frequently, it ceases even to be a deterrent. Moreover, a slap is very often given, simply because the mother or nurse has lost her patience. It is not to be wondered at that this should happen occasionally, but the fact remains that slapping under such circumstances is neither right nor, in the long run, effective. So easy is it to take advantage of our superior strength in dealing with children, that nurses should never be permitted to use corporal punishment without having to report the fact to the child's parents; and parents themselves would do well, in some way or another, to put limits on their own freedom of action in this matter.

Take an instance. We will suppose a boy, between 5 and 6 years old, had got into the habit of rebelling, and rudely rebelling, against home discipline, in small but important matters. Our judgment tells us that we must cure him. We try first one method, then another; but all are equally ineffective. Corporal punishment, I am taking for granted, must be very rarely used. At last, having tried various methods for weeks—this is quite a possible case—we make up our mind that there is nothing for it but either to give up, for the time, the task of curing the child, or to try at any rate what a whipping will do. We then tell the boy, quietly and firmly, that such and such a habit must be stopped, that we have tried to help him, that it is still as bad as ever,



that the very next time it occurs he will be whipped, and whipped every time until it ceases. The threat alone has an influence, if the boy knows from experience that we always carry out what we say—but probably in a few days, help him and warn him all we may, the effect of the threat wears off. We have been dreading the whipping for him, even more than he has for himself, and the days have been anxious ones. At last he forgets, and the old fault is there again; he is whipped, and one thorough whipping is at times enough. We are not angry, we have waited for this, and when the crisis comes, it is an uncomfortable business, for us as well as the boy. He knows he could have avoided it, that it is quite just, there is no anger on our side or resentment on his, both our thoughts and his are centred on the fault itself.

There is a world of difference between deliberate corporal punishment of this kind, and corporal punishment as so often given. It is harder for us to whip in cold blood than when our blood is up, though, if we have said we will whip, we have to do it. But the effect on the boy is much greater than if we whipped him when we were angry. We rouse no evil feelings in him by such a punishment, which he knows he has brought on himself. We only check the bad habit into which he has got, and which was preventing the better part of his nature from developing. Pain—even physical pain—in such a case, that is, if calmly and deliberately given, is a “rudder of education”.

In the case of older boys, a safeguard against corporal punishment given in anger would be provided if the whipping did not immediately follow the offence.<sup>1</sup> An interval, however short, would give time for the judicial spirit to assert itself. *The effectiveness and the rightfulness of corporal punishment is, however, entirely dependent on its being given in the right spirit, accepted by the child himself in the right spirit, and on its rarity*

When corporal punishment is used, it must be deliberately given; the child must have had previous warning, so that he feels it to be just. It must be calmly, but effectively, administered and, to be effective, it must be sufficiently severe to be felt, but not so severe as to lessen the child's love for the giver of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. “The Secondary Education of Boys,” by C. Norwood and A. H. Hope.



punishment. The question is, is it possible for the parent to administer such a punishment calmly to an older boy? Unless it can be so given, it has no right to be given at all; but, as a matter of fact, if whipping is very rarely used, if we never whip without having first warned the child that this punishment would follow a particular offence, it is not hard to keep our temper; the difficulty rather is to make ourselves whip him at all, when the time comes. But, beyond all else, it is necessary that we, as parents, nurses and teachers, should be able to exercise self-control, as well as control over the children. We need to be able to think out our difficulties; to get outside them as it were, and decide what it is best to do, and then to do it; to get more understanding in our work and a higher ideal.

Corporal punishment has been in the past, and still is, so grossly abused, that it is no wonder that modern writers declare that when education is better understood, there is little doubt that corporal punishment will be considered singularly irrational and unphilosophical, and that educators will then seek, and find, intellectual and moral means for producing intellectual and moral results.<sup>1</sup> In general, this will be so; but I have little doubt that there will still be cases among boys in which corporal punishment is very occasionally needed. In any case, when people begin to inquire into the object of punishment, and realize that mere retributive punishment should be a thing of the past, corporal punishment, when it is given, will be given in a wholly different spirit to that in which it is frequently administered to-day. Administered in a proper spirit, it will certainly do no harm, and will, with some children, be productive of positive good.

<sup>1</sup> See "Early Training of Children" (Malleeson).



## CHAPTER X.

### FREEDOM WITHIN THE LAW.

Law and liberty—"Freedom is only granted us that obedience may be the more perfect"—Neglect of the demands of the *social* order results in disorder, waste of energy, time and temper—*Personal* discipline compared with the discipline of a *system*—Such systematic discipline becomes unnecessary when good habits have been formed—Demands of the *moral* order—The right use of liberty depends on the possession of right desires—Need in some cases for the special cultivation of right, and punishment of wrong, impulses; for insistence upon right-doing—Insight and uniformity of judgment on our part necessary—The intense longing for freedom felt by some children—Need for them to realize that such freedom can only be found within the limits set by law—"Nagging" and ineffective repetition of commands—The "lust of power"—Rule and misrule—Freedom essential to growth.

UNCONVENTIONAL, in many ways, as are the methods of life and teaching in a large school in the South of England, Sundays there are especially unconventional! To the elder children, they are indeed holidays—holy days. For the greater part of the day, their time is their own. In groups, they wander off on long country rambles, some exploring the country round, some in search of botanical or geological specimens, some "bug-hunting". Others take photographs, a few spend the greater part of the day with their pets, some revel in books—but all are free; all, as far as one can see, earnest and happy. As they follow their natural bent in the matter of occupation, so in the matter of dress. Flannel shirts and loose open collars are worn, not the Sunday clothes which betoken, to most boys, at any rate, the conventions and restrictions bound up with our English idea of Sunday. There is a certain sense of peace which makes it seem like Sunday to them—peace, in the quiet happiness felt by each child in following his chosen



occupation. The gladness of freedom, for the most part cheerfully and wisely used, finds a fitting conclusion in the Evening Service.

Such Sundays may be a mistake, or they may be specially calculated to inspire those children with a reverent and religious spirit. According to our special upbringing, according to our individual religious opinions, difference of opinion will exist. But, whether desirable or undesirable, as a method of spending the Sunday, the fact that a day can be so spent in any social community shows us the value of discipline, discipline which prepares the way for perfect liberty. Discipline there must be in the school life—Sundays and week days alike—for the sake of the well-being of the community—for the sake of the well-being of each individual child. The wisely used freedom of Sunday could only become possible as the result of faithful adherence to school discipline, in all its details, throughout the week. But, on those precious Sundays, the children are not conscious of the discipline as a burden, they obey spontaneously and without effort.

In the ideal home, always, year in, year out, each child should, as he grows, feel free to develop happily upon his own lines. He is a member of a family, just as at school he is a member of the school community; such membership entails obligations upon him, but it showers benefits. The inspiring clash of opinions that follows from mutual respect, mutual helpfulness, mutual sympathy—should be combined with individual freedom for self-development. But such freedom must be earned through discipline. "Liberty must be limited in order to be possessed."<sup>1</sup> What lessons must be learned ere the child is ready for this precious, and indeed needful, liberty? How are such lessons best taught?

"I wish that some day nobody would interfere with me; just for that one day, it would be lovely if I could do just whatever I liked from morning till night," murmured Eric, one morning before getting up. "You shall have a free day whenever you like to ask for it, and you shall see how you like it," his mother replied, for Eric was 9 years old, and no serious harm could have come to him. "Shall I give the others free-

<sup>1</sup> Burke.



dom to do what *they* like at the same time?" Great was his agitation. "Oh no, if nobody keeps them in order, I shall be miserable!" Even Eric realized that liberty for *all* must mean law for *all*. Every one unpunctual for meals, every one getting up when they chose, every one leaving toys about when they had finished with them, every one free to do what they chose regardless of other persons' feelings, was out of the question. Without some general recognition of the demands of the *social* order of the home, liberty would lead to chaos; without some general recognition of the demands of the *moral* order of the home, each doing unto others, to some extent, that which they would, that others should do unto them, liberty would degenerate into licence, and result in unhappiness all round. The more these social and moral obligations are recognized and instinctively followed, the greater the freedom which the children are able to enjoy.

#### DEMANDS OF THE SOCIAL ORDER.

In discussing the manner in which we train the children to recognize the necessity of, and to follow, the law, we need to draw a distinction between the demands of social order—those things which it is right to do for the sake of the smooth working of the home life; and the demands of the moral order—those things which are right in themselves. There is nothing *morally* wrong in not changing one's boots when returning from a walk, in sitting down to dinner with dirty hands, in fidgeting at table, in leaving coat and cap lying about in the hall. But such offences against order, neatness, punctuality or good manners are extremely inconvenient, if they become habitual; and they lead to chaos, ill-temper, weariness and nagging. The children may enjoy their freedom unchecked; but it is at the cost of slavery and worry on the part of other people; and this is not right. Moreover, even the children themselves suffer from their own slackness. It is a truism that orderly habits mean an orderly mind. The amount of time which is wasted in the course of twelve months, in looking for missing gloves, caps and books; the amount of money which is wasted in toys, broken, because they have not been taken care of; the amount of temper and energy, which is wasted in looking for



things which should never have been lost, in making up for time lost through dawdling—is beyond calculation.

Mr. Paton, in a lecture on school discipline, told how "some thirty years ago, the sand bar at the mouth of the Mississippi had so increased, that large and heavily loaded ships had to wait days, and sometimes weeks, before they could get out to sea. Millions of dollars were wasted in dredging: the biggest river in the world was more than a match for the dredgers. At last, an engineer came forward, who undertook to uncork the mouth of the river and keep it open. His plan was ingenious. He had noticed that where the river was narrow, the current was strong—so strong that it swirled all the mud through instead of depositing it. Accordingly, he saw that, if he narrowed the channel of the exit, the force of the stream would be so increased as to carry out, with training walls, the sand and silt and mud into the deep sea: the bar, once cleared, would never form again. And it was so."

So, in the home, without the training walls of discipline in these minor matters, effort is wasted, and energy is dissipated, which would otherwise have found for itself a channel in fruitful directions. In a home in which there is no such discipline, there is constant friction, and a constant blocking of the path of satisfactory work, through the amount of time necessarily given to undoing the effect of other people's inattention to the details of social order. How can such friction and waste be avoided, and discipline be attained? Does the effort to enforce discipline in itself introduce fresh elements of friction, in the place of those which were there before?

Not if the discipline is wisely, consistently and mechanically imposed; and this is where the home so often fails, it does not go to work systematically. Instead of laying down certain laws, fixing certain penalties, and mechanically and unfailingly exacting them; we constantly remind the children, punish sometimes, and, at other times, exempt from punishment—with the result that, when we do punish, the children think themselves hardly and unfairly treated, and when we exempt from punishment, they cease to make any effort. "So long as a boy knows," writes Mr. Paton, "that a certain offence brings a certain penalty, he does not feel himself spited; he no more resents being kept in by the master than being kept in by the weather.



Only punishment must be certain. If there is a chance of escape, even at the longest odds, a boy will risk it. He won't be deterred from whispering in class by the *possible* risk of a thousand lines, but he will by the *certain*ty of thirty. Your English boy is a sportsman, if you give him a chance for sportsmanship."<sup>1</sup>

The "Human Boy" is the same at home as at school; and in this respect, the girl does not differ widely from the boy. Only, generally speaking, her offences against the social order are less aggressive than his, and our spasmodic efforts to improve her in this respect are taken more good-temperedly.

It is trying, of course, to have to get up when one is called, to have to clear away one occupation before starting on another—but if disagreeable things have to be done, the sooner they become automatic the better.

Some children are naturally tidy and methodical; they require little, if any, training. But with others, it is a wholly different matter. Constant reminders are necessary, but are often regarded only as a nuisance. Often we forget to remind, and, for the sake of peace, we often do for the child what he should have done for himself. We argue with him over things about which there should be no question, and, all the time, we only increase for him the difficulty of habitual right-doing.

"John," says his mother, "why have you come to table without washing your hands?"

"I *did* wash them," John replies.

"You can't have washed them properly, look at them."

"How do you know I didn't wash them?" he continues; "you weren't there to see! I put them under the tap."

"Well, it's not nice to eat your food with hands like that."

"My food goes into my own mouth, doesn't it? and I don't mind."

"Well, then, I do; I don't like to see hands like that at the table."

"Turn the other way then and don't look," is John's final rejoinder.

"John," replies his mother, in a pained voice, "how *can* you argue with me like that?"

<sup>1</sup>"Journal of Education."



"I didn't begin to argue," breaks in the hardened young sinner, "*you* did!"

This kind of argument, in which the child generally gets the best of it, for he does not care what he says, frequently goes on in many homes, and over matters about which there should be no discussion. What is the gain in replying to such questions as: "Why should I brush my hair?" or "What's the good of leaving the room tidy?" or "Why need I wash my hands?" The child, who asks them, is not seeking for information; if he chose, he could answer his questions for himself; he is merely trying to argue himself out of doing what he has been told to do. Yet how often we are weak enough, short-sighted enough, to reply! Professor Sully<sup>1</sup> tells the story of a little girl of 3½ who was told not to talk at dinner-time when some visitors were present. "Why me no talk? Papa talks." "Yes," was the reply, "but Papa is grown-up, and you are only a little girl, you can't do just like grown-up people!" She was silent for some time, but when her mother told her, ten minutes later, to sit nicely with her hands in her lap like her cousins, she replied, with a humorous smile: "Me tan't sit like grown-up people, me is only a little girl!"

Some things must be done, simply because we say so; we say so for the general good of the home; for, without order, liberty is chaos. Energy, time and temper is wasted, unless the doing of these things becomes habitual.

Two children had to go to school each morning by train, which necessitated a prompt and early breakfast. But, in the winter mornings, they found it hard to get up, only went to their bath after repeated reminders, leaving barely enough time to wash and dress. Dressing was hurried over, breakfast was hurried over—the whole household seemed to be occupied, each morning, in hastening the children through their meal, finding caps, coats and books, and finally bustling them off just in time for the train. *Time* had been lost at the starting of the day; as a result, *tempers* were lost later. After some time, it occurred to the children's parents that some way ought to be found to avoid this unsatisfactory state of affairs. Rules were then put up in the children's rooms to the effect that they must

<sup>1</sup> "Studies from Childhood."



rise directly they were called, leave bedroom tidy, put on boots before breakfast, be ready for breakfast at the right time, hang up coats, caps, school-bags, etc., on the pegs overnight, and so forth; and personal reminders were no longer given. Any omission resulted in a bad mark; and two bad marks in any one day meant fifteen minutes earlier to bed that night. The enforcement of the rules worked a miraculous change. Children, who are not amenable to *personal* discipline will, as Mr. Paton says, submit willingly to the discipline of a *system*. Bad marks were given good-temperedly and mechanically, and for the most part received in the same way.

The remedy sounds simple enough. But it is difficult, in a busy home, to apply it systematically. We get slack in noting whether slippers are put away or night-clothes folded up; and the children follow suit. The success of the method depends on the certainty with which failure is noted, and punishment given; the latter can be almost insignificant as long as it is certain.

If there is sufficient need in the home for this kind of training, (some children are so much less trouble than others!) we shall gradually find ways of helping the children to succeed, and of helping ourselves to be methodical. Some children break rules so much oftener than others, without meaning to be disobedient, simply because they never give themselves time to stop and think; and unless they deliberately think, they do not remember the rule.

Martin, for instance, is keenly interested in a new steam-engine—he does not stop to remember that the dining-room is not the place to work it in; at school, he puts out his foot to trip up another boy as he passes, and only remembers directly *after* he has put his thought into action, that such things must not be; he tosses off his coat and cap, and is away up to the playground for a game, before it ever enters his mind to change his boots. *Thought*, in Martin's case, *too quickly realizes itself in action*, so quickly that the contrary, and controlling, thought has no time to enter in, and serve as a check. Can we do anything in such a case to help him to gain control, and so avoid the constant petty punishments which he would otherwise incur, and which, if frequent, are non-remedial, and even positively harmful. Anything which could impress the law



more deeply on his consciousness, without at the same time boring or annoying him, this is what he needs.

Martin's rules were posted up by the side of his bed, for he was one of those who preferred system to personal rule. Each night, his mother went through the rules with him. Great fun they had over the performance, by making the whole thing as real as possible! "Hullo," his Mother would say, "a shout is heard in the garden! Here's Martin home from school! In he comes, helter-skelter, he has bought a new top and wants to try it in the playroom before tea! Off with his coat and cap, and up the stairs——" pause—"What has he forgotten?" Martin, with his eyes full of fun: "He never hung up his coat and cap, and he didn't take off his boots". "Back he runs then," goes on Mother, "boots don't take long after all; up the stairs, two at a time, into the playroom! What a ripping top! How it spins! Dong—dong—dong, goes the gong for tea. But Martin hardly attends to the sound,—doesn't the top spin for a long time on end! All of a sudden, he remembers!—what?" A pause again, and Martin breaks in, quoting another rule: "Stop whatever you are doing, when the gong rings for meals!" And so, each night, Martin and his Mother run through the short list of those things which *must* be remembered at home and at school; and if he had forgotten any rule through the day, that rule he had to write out carefully four times to impress it the better on his memory. A difference was quickly made; Martin was unconsciously, not deliberately, disobedient; he *always* forgot; but gradually these few things became so embedded, as it were, in his brain, that directly he began to do something which was forbidden, a thought-message was sent swiftly down, which served as a check.

It helps the mechanical nature of a system of this kind, if we let the children go through the rules at a certain fixed time each day, and themselves tell us which they have broken. Each careful reading through serves to impress them on the memory; it is more pleasant for the children to confess that they have left their slippers about, than to be *told* that they had done so; it is easier for the children to realize thus the impersonal nature of the penalty to be paid.

Rules of this kind are useless, unless some grown-up person is able to see that they are kept, and kept *without friction*; but



if they can be adhered to, they are a help to the children in the building up of good habits, just as a scaffolding helps in the building of a house. They avoid the constant repeating on our part of the same directions, the constant forcing of the child to recognize the authority of grown-up persons. When the habits are formed, the rules become needless, for, in the home, occasional forgetfulness is not an important matter. After a child is 12 years old, rules in the home should be unnecessary.

Such a system of discipline, wisely and good-temperedly carried out, is good training both for those who enforce the rules, and for those who obey them. Those who enforce them are themselves trained in orderliness, and in the capacity of looking ahead, so that they can see what rules are necessary to bring about the formation of right habits, and to prevent offences. They must see to it that their discipline is so regular and essential, as not to be too evident; it should be "one of the things we take for granted, so fundamental that it is out of sight".

#### DEMANDS OF THE MORAL ORDER.

So much for the need and the method of training in the recognition of the social order in the home. But the possibility of liberty depends even more upon the recognition of the moral law, upon the child's spontaneous desires being of the right kind. Training in desire is bound up with the wider question of the training of character.

Some children are, as Professor James has aptly put it, "once-born". From earliest childhood, their impulses are good; they may fail in minor matters, but they never seem to want to do anything morally wrong. For such children, but little training is necessary, daily life affords countless opportunities for the strengthening of the good impulses, which they possess as a birthright.

But many children are among the "twice-born"; their natures an unresolved complex of good and bad impulses. The chances of the day often afford equal opportunities for the development of the good, and the bad, side of their characters, or perhaps even draw out the bad rather than the good. In the



case of such children, if we want to make sure that the right finally triumphs, we need to provide special opportunities for encouraging their good desires; we need to persist in demanding the doing of right actions apart from impulse, trusting that the pleasure in right doing will follow; we need to punish the exhibition of the bad impulse, for failure to do right is often more than mere failure at the time, it may result in an actual strengthening of the wrong impulse.

Ronald was a strong-willed lad from birth. Impressionable and responsive in certain directions, while he was small he never consciously yielded his own will to that of others, without a preliminary outburst of fierce and exhausting passion—passion which he feared for himself, and yet which he found it hard to control. "Don't let me be naughty again, Mother," he used to say, after one of these terrible storms, leaving him pale and trembling; "I don't like to feel like this." This tendency to passion increased in intensity after he was two years old, and at the same time, he gradually became increasingly selfish. On one occasion, he had had two penny boxes of dominoes given to him on the same day. When his Mother was out, she met a little blind girl whom Ronald knew, who wanted a box; but it was "early closing day," the shops in the village were all shut. Dominoes were this child's favourite toy, and her elder sister had therefore gone to see if she could find a toy shop open anywhere near. Ronald's Mother, naturally enough, said that, if she could not get one, she was sure Ronald would be glad to give her one of his. In about an hour, the dominoes were called for; but Ronald had not been able to make up his mind to give one away. Finally, his Mother insisted on the box being given, whether he wanted to or no. Against the grain, the good action was done; but the next day, the little lad told his Mother how glad he was, and rejoiced in the thought of the blind child's happiness.

After he was 3, the desire to be helpful in little ways waned also, and he only learnt the joy of running messages through the actual doing.<sup>1</sup> Persistently he refused to help, and sat in a chair, crying, till he was ready to do what he was asked. When his services were finally given, even though unwillingly

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 105.



and often ungraciously, he was rewarded with thanks, and gradually he began to experience the joy of service and, for the most part, gladly to help.

When the impulse to help, when the desire to share, is wanting in strength, we must be careful not to make undue demands. The child, whose limbs are weak, is not encouraged to go for long walks and so overtax his strength: we strengthen the limbs by massage, give rest as well as exercise, till gradually they become normal. So with the child whose good impulses are weak: we strengthen them by special care, we do not overtax them by demanding what it would be hard to expect, and gradually, as the good impulses grow stronger, we are able to expect, and it is well to expect, a higher standard of conduct. Such a child needs all the love and sympathy which we can shower upon him. "The secret of help is encouragement." We should make him feel so increasingly in touch with those around him in the home, that the sense of harmony with them should be his strongest spur to right action. Right desires will then be increasingly followed, because his greatest joy is found when he shares in the communal life: when he exercises his anti-social impulses, he loses this joy.

An older boy had behaved rudely in the kitchen, and his Mother, hearing of it, said that he ought to beg the cook's pardon. He felt that he could not do it; some boys find it very hard to own up when they have been in the wrong, especially to those whom they choose to regard as their inferiors. His Mother and he talked the matter over, but she did not insist, as an apology to be worth anything must be honest. However, she felt sorry that her son could not act in what seemed to her a manly way; and her face showed it. The boy could not feel comfortable, when his Mother looked so; yet he would do nothing merely under compulsion. A struggle went on in his mind. Spurred on by a desire to be in touch with one whom he loved, right conquered, and he made himself apologize.

In this process of the gradual replacing of wrong by right desires, we can do much to help by being uniform in our judgments. The child does not always feel his desires on suitable occasions, or express them in the right way, and we are tempted to form hasty judgments.



The desire to help is good ; yet how often, because we know we can get on more quickly without than with the child's help, we brusquely reject it, as if the child were a bother. Professor Sully refers to an American work in which the writer describes the remorse of a father who, after his child's death, recalled the little fellow's first crude endeavour to help him by bringing fuel, an endeavour which he had met with something like a rebuff.

The desire to be independent is good ; and yet, in practical life, how trying is the child who, in her independence, goes on her own account to wash herself, and wets all her clothes in the process. It requires considerable self-control so to act that, in spite of our criticism on occasions, the child realizes our respect for, and sympathy with, its independent spirit.

The child's desire to learn, to inquire into and investigate every new thing, is good in itself : in the practical details of daily life, we often check natural curiosity, as if it were mere meddlesomeness.

The readiness to be outspoken is good : yet frequently, in a manner which must be indeed puzzling to the simple nature of the child, frankness of speech is termed "bad manners".

Ellis had had a steamboat given to him on Friday night ; and none of the other children had seen it. Ellis was therefore given permission to show how it worked for a few minutes after Saturday dinner. Six children crowding round the bath resulted in an accident ! The boat was upset, the paraffin spilt, and the cleaning of that bath after five minutes of the steamboat was a somewhat lengthy process ! It was difficult not to blame the children, but nothing wrong had been done. We must be uniform in our judgments, and only meet with disapproval the expression of wrong *desires*, not accidents which happen so often to the most careful grown-up person !

But in the consideration of the question of Desire, we have so far left out of account the Self which desires. Some children would choose freedom above all else ; they would rather sin on their own initiative and suffer afterwards, than do right in obedience to the will of others and enjoy the good fruits of their virtuous acts.



"Why can't I have my own way when I like it so much? one little lass of 5 asked pathetically.

Another strong-willed mite of 4 was checked for drawing on the blackboard with her left hand. "It's my own," she said. "Yes," replied her nurse, "I know it's your own hand, but it's the wrong *way*." "It's my own way, I mean," the child replied, "and I want to do things my own way. I like my own way better than anything else."

"And I'm glad I *did* disobey," was the honest expression of opinion of a boy of 5.

Freedom is what they want, freedom to do right or to do wrong, as the case may be.

Such children must learn that it is wrong-doing which is invariably checked; that in right-doing, and only in right-doing, is to be found the freedom for which they long. When once they voluntarily put themselves on the side of the law, they should be but rarely conscious of restriction: *freedom* within the law: *bondage*, only when the law is ignored.

But this deliberate choice of right-doing, for the sake of liberty, implies a greater power of reasoning than the child will possess for some years. If, during all these years before he understands, the law is so imposed that he is in a constant state of irritation or rebellion, the process of falling in with it later, when he is capable of grasping the situation, is made extremely difficult, if not impossible. Before *he* can understand, *we* must understand. We must see that the commands which must be given are made as invariable as possible, in order that the child, through realizing their inevitableness, may adjust himself to them, as he does to the Laws of Nature; and as clear and definite as possible, in order that he may learn the difference between right and wrong. We must avoid "nagging" and ineffective repetition of our commands, which only irritate him by making him conscious of the constant interference of other wills with his own. Repetition on our part results in inattention on his, whereas prompt attention to commands helps him to adjust his actions in accordance with them.

Both Mother and Nurse constantly failed to prevent "scenes" in the daily management of one small lad of 7. Self-willed, hysterical, rebellious and dreamy, as he was, every small event



in the routine of nursery life was the cause of difficulties. "Maurice," Nurse would say, "stop your game now and put on your boots." Maurice heard; but all he said was: "In a minute"; and went on with his game. "No, now, dear," Nurse would say, "put them on at once." "Don't bother, I only want to finish this." But he forgot, and was again reminded, and this last reminder he only felt to be a still greater interference with his game. Finally, Nurse spoke sharply, and then Maurice was furious—furious at having to put on his boots at all, furious at the stoppage of the game and at Nurse's vexation. It was always the same: everything he had to be told repeatedly, from the time of getting up in the morning till going to bed at night. At last, an idea occurred to those baffled grown-ups in charge! One day, Master Maurice was informed that he would be told nothing a second time; that if he did not pay attention at once, some one would help him to do, or do for him, that which he had been told to do for himself, but—he would have a bad mark, and two bad marks meant a quarter of an hour earlier to bed at night! The first day, so strong was his habit of inattention, he could hardly adjust himself to the new state of things. When told to put on his boots, he continued his game as usual; then, with a smile, Nurse brought his boots to him and helped him to put them on. She helped him to tidy up his play-things, when he did not do it at once. Life seemed very smooth for him that day; but, at night, he had a considerably longer time than usual in bed, which he did not by any means appreciate! Even that *one* long night made a difference in his behaviour. In a short time, Maurice was largely cured of inattention and rebellion, and became more anxious to listen to, and side with, the dictates of the law.

But it is not only ineffective repetition which weakens and irritates the strong-willed child, it is the "lust" of power, which we often all unconsciously disclose to him, and against which he instinctively, and rightly, rebels. "How *dare* you disobey me?" we say to the child, forgetting that surely his "daring," his fearless attitude towards ourselves, who are so much stronger and bigger than he, is one of the finest things about him. When the grown-up person declares to the child, "You have never mastered me *yet*, and you never *shall*,"—is it not enough



to arouse in him the desire to prove the assertion wrong? Have we half the pluck in the face of overwhelming difficulties which the child has?

"I see that some people have got to rule over children," said a philosopher of 7 years, "but they needn't shout, they can tell you things in a happy way, with a smile and a happy voice!"

The child's objection is not to *rule*, but to *misrule*; not to *all* rulers, but to particular rulers who do not know how to rule, or who have no right, in his opinion, to rule over him. Some grown-up persons have a way of ordering that things shall not be done, in such a way as to make the mischievous, high-spirited child long to do them. The boy stands talking, after tea, with his fingers, probably not over-clean, on the back of the polished chair. "James, *do* take your hands off the back of that chair, you *do* mark them so," says the agitated housewife; and Jim, doubtless a hardened sinner, follows his instincts by rubbing his fingers (or pretending to!) along chair after chair, wickedly revelling in the agitation he is producing. A quiet "Hands off, old chap," would in all probability have had the desired effect; the demon of mischief would have slept on undisturbed.<sup>1</sup>

The lawgivers should be as few, and as capable, as can be; the laws should be few and necessary; and the child should understand who and what they are. Commands should be as impersonal as possible. Many children can obey a bell, when it calls them to breakfast, more easily than the sound of the human voice, with which it is in their power to argue. There is no arguing with a written rule. If law is only systematically carried out, the child is capable of realizing it, not so much as the interference of other wills, as social and moral order; and, after all, order is one of the conditions of his security and happiness.

But let such strong-willed children enjoy, from the first, the maximum of freedom to use their own wills in rightful channels; by some means or other, let there be the minimum of "forcing" of our will upon theirs. Every occasion of opposition only increases the child's sense of antagonism, and makes yielding

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 24.



harder the next time. But to avoid compulsion must not be taken to mean weakness on our part. The child is helped to submit voluntarily, by the fact that he realizes that we have the power to insist in the last resort, and that we shall not shirk the task. Strong himself, he respects strength in his rulers. Such power must be used *respectfully*: it must not be flaunted before him, as something before which he ought to bow.

"Informed at the outset by a fine moral feeling," writes Professor Sully, "and a practical tact as to what ought to be expected, the wise mother is concerned before everything to make her laws appear as much a matter of course as the daily sequences of the home life, as unquestionable axioms of behaviour; and this not by a foolish vehemence of inculcation, but by a quiet, skilful inweaving of them into the order of the child's world. To expect the right thing as though the wrong were an impossibility, rather than to be always pointing out the wrong thing and threatening consequences; to make all her words and all her own actions support this view of the inevitableness of the law; to meet any indications of a disobedient spirit, first with misunderstanding and later with amazement; this is surely the first and fundamental matter. The quiet daily insistence of the wise rule of the nursery proceeds by setting up and maintaining the ideas of dutiful actions and so excluding the thought of disobedient actions."

This comes first; and by right suggestions, given in the right way and at the right time, much can be accomplished. But, in dealing with complex natures, more is needed. Response is not always to be obtained; the child deliberately wills, on occasions, to be disobedient; he wills, for the sake of willing, to do the opposite of what is expected. Right-doing must be insisted upon, when necessary; wrong-doing must be fearlessly punished.

As the child grows older, he must increasingly act rightly, independently of suggestions; the habit of right-doing must be formed, even though, at times, against the grain. And this must be accomplished in such a way, that the child, growing in obedience to law, becomes at the same time increasingly *conscious* of freedom. His obedience is to be a voluntary, whole-hearted obedience; the obedience of the free-man,



not the slave; the willing obedience of the gospel replacing, as early as may be, the bondage to the law. "You are not the shepherd of sheep," writes Mr. Paton in an address to teachers, "you are rulers of men. Your discipline is a failure, if it depends on you alone: it is a success, if it is broad, based upon your subjects' *willing co-operation*." His words apply equally to all who are in any way responsible for the training of children.

"If you left me free for a whole day and never told me what I ought or ought not to do, I think, after all, I should try and do just the same as if you were telling me"—so said a lad of 9 years, trained in the spirit of Mr. Paton's words. His Mother's "must" had become his "will".

High ideals have been laid down in this chapter—a high ideal of law as imposed by us on the children, a high ideal of the capacity of the children to respond to laws thus imposed. But it is good that we should do our utmost to realize our ideal in every-day life, even though we know, all the time, that, in detail, we shall fall short of it.

If it must needs be that we fail to live up to our standard of enlightened government—it is better to fail on the side of freedom than of discipline; of love without wisdom, than of wisdom (could it be wisdom?) without love. The enjoyment of freedom is even more necessary to the development of character in right desires, than the development of desire in right directions is necessary for the right use of freedom.

Children, who are made to do the right, without learning to love the right, often blunder irretrievably, when left to follow their own bent. Goodness has been made unlovely, because it was unduly forced upon them, and they found no joy in the doing of it.

Children, who have been over-trained in "moral docility," may continue to be led too easily, and perhaps led in wrong directions, when they leave the sheltered walls of home. Until we give them freedom, to do good or ill, according to their desire, we are ignorant of the tendencies of their nature. If those tendencies are good, they will develop when the children are free to use them spontaneously. If they are bad it is



surely a vital necessity that they should show themselves early, while there is yet time to correct them.

Freedom which is to some extent abused, is better than over-protection: without the knowledge of good and evil, without freedom to fall and to rise again, men cannot grow like unto the Gods.



## CHAPTER XI.

### CHILDISH CURIOSITY.

Curiosity, an appetite for knowledge and fresh experiences, the stimulus which fits the child for freedom—Should the child's curiosity invariably be satisfied?—Sometimes inadvisable—Why?—Healthy and morbid curiosity—Influence of a full and vigorous life—Facts concerning painful illness, death and crime—Sex questions—Necessity for telling the child the truth, before he "picks up" knowledge from outside sources—Spiritual truth underlying physical facts—Love at the heart of the universe—Father Christmas and Santa Claus—Belief in fairies.

A BABY lies in his cradle in the nursery, playing with his rattle. First, his fingers explore its surface; then he puts it to his mouth. One tiny hand begins to play with the other, fingers intertwining with fingers. Mother bends over the cradle, and, with a smile of pleasure, the little hands stretch up to play with Mother's face, with Mother's hair. The baby is absorbed. He is happy and interested.

Later on in the day, when he has had his bath, and lies on his Mother's lap by the fire, he stretches out his little limbs to enjoy the blaze, cooing with pleasure as he watches the moving light. He tries to put those toes, so rosy in the firelight, into his mouth. He pulls at his Mother's apron; that too goes to his mouth. How strange! His experience is different when he sucks the *foot* and when he sucks the apron! He felt a sensation in his toe, as well as in his mouth, the first time; a sensation in his mouth only, the second time.<sup>1</sup> What does it mean?

So, from day to day, fresh and interesting experiences crowd in upon him. There is always something new to watch, to hear, to taste, to feel. The baby has much to learn: all is

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 30.



unknown. In fact, we are said to learn more in the first twelve *months* than in any period of twelve *years* later on.

But the baby has a relish for new experiences, they are a delight to him. He is full of curiosity.

Curiosity, in psychological language, is this very relish, this appetite for new experiences, which "produces in consciousness a concentration of activity, called Attention, and a feeling accompanying this, called Interest".<sup>1</sup>

Without curiosity, the baby would never learn. Because he is naturally curious, he learns to distinguish between his own body and other objects around him, between his Mother, his nurse and other people. He learns the direction of sound, and the distance of objects away from him. These are things which he *needs* to learn, they prepare him for an active life. Before he possesses the power to walk or crawl, he needs to gain the knowledge which he will then require for his own self-protection. *Curiosity is the stimulus which impels him to prepare for freedom.* The greater the possibilities of freedom, the more urgent is the need for curiosity.

This impulse to investigate what is new, simply because it *is* new—is then good in itself. If we invariably, or even generally, waited to acquire our knowledge, until we actually needed that knowledge, we should miss numberless opportunities. *Every* new experience, *every* fresh stimulus, arouses curiosity at the beginning of a child's life; the stronger the stimulus, the greater the curiosity—but all is full of interest—everything which can be is inquired into. This instinctive curiosity to dive into the unknown is good in itself.

Yet there are practical difficulties in the way of a child's unlimited desire to know. Although we recognize search for knowledge as a good thing, yet, in experience, we hesitate to satisfy the children in certain directions. We hesitate, for instance, to tell them all that they may wish to know with regard to the wages which are paid to servants in the house, details of our own income and expenditure, facts concerning crime and illness, birth and death.

Why do we hesitate? Why do we feel curiosity to be good in some directions and bad in others, and does our judgment justify our instinctive hesitation?

<sup>1</sup> "An Introduction to Child Study," Kirkpatrick.



Sometimes it undoubtedly does. The right of private property holds with regard to information about people's own concerns equally with their own belongings. If they make no secret of their age, if they are willing that any one should know the money they receive, the contents of their parcels and letters, well and good. But we judge, and judge rightly, that if we always satisfy the children's curiosity, when publicity is possible, an unnatural curiosity, in itself objectionable, is inevitably aroused, whenever we deem privacy to be desirable.

This is not, however, the sole reason for keeping from the children the facts of wages, price of gifts, etc. A larger issue is at stake in these matters. The child, who is anxious to know the money value of his presents, discloses a tendency to estimate the value and importance of his gifts by their price. He forms an exaggerated idea of the importance and meaning of money at an early age. The child, who is unduly inquisitive about wages, shows a tendency to forget the more important fact, that the value of the services rendered by our servant cannot be estimated by the wages paid. The worth to the receiver of a present should depend on the thought expended on it by the giver—the love, the sacrifice, which it entailed; just as the widow's mite counted for more than all the money spared by the rich out of their plenty. Services which are faithfully rendered cannot be adequately measured and paid for by any amount of mere money. Care for the different members of the family and a high sense of duty prompt such services; gratitude, and a corresponding sense of what we owe in return, reward them. Money is necessary in our present civilization; but it is nothing but a medium of exchange, it can never be a measure of the value of a gift, nor of services gladly rendered. From the beginning, a child should not be allowed to look upon servants as persons who are *paid* to wait upon him; he should realize that he has duties towards them; that he himself owes them something for the services they render. If they grow up with this point of view towards those who help in the work of the house, later on, in boyhood or girlhood, when they can realize the abstract facts of duty and gratitude, equally with the concrete facts of money paid and received; when larger questions interest them and they are beginning to try to think out problems of expenditure, attempt-



ing to estimate facts in their due proportion, we rightly tell them what they need to know. But, by satisfying their curiosity when they are small, we should only encourage them in a wrong standpoint.

In such matters, then, our objections are valid. What of those larger questions, of illness and crime, of sex-differences, of birth and death, about which we are also naturally reticent?

Concerning these, we are influenced to a large extent by the manner in which the child asks for knowledge. There is a self-conscious look, which some children occasionally put on when they ask certain questions, which makes us doubt whether their attitude towards such matters is perfectly natural and healthy.

A girl, about 6, pointed to the breasts in a picture of a flaked Hottentot woman, asking her Mother, in an unnatural manner, what they were. Perfectly simply, her Mother replied: "Her breasts, of course, dear. You have often seen me feeding the babies, and you know the wonderful way in which God makes the bodies of mothers, so that they are able to feed the tiny babies when He sends them." The self-conscious look died out of the child's face. She was not told that she ought not to notice or talk about such things, and, in consequence, she no longer specially wanted to talk about them. Her thoughts were lifted away from the mere detail of some part of the body, which was generally hidden, and therefore specially interesting, on to the thought of God. The parts of the body were created as part of God's great and wonderful purpose.

If, because we do not like the child's manner of asking, we refuse to answer, we only increase the difficulty. The child needs to realize that there is nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to be self-conscious about in a proper knowledge of her own frame. If we create a habit of openness and naturalness in connexion with such matters, in nine cases out of ten any unhealthy element which may exist, will disappear like magic.

The fact is that it is often only *our* false ideas of modesty, which create in the child any unhealthy interests. When we are perfectly natural, the child is equally so. Another girl, somewhat older, was watching a tiny baby in its bath. The navel was not quite normal, and the girl told her mother afterwards that she had not been able to help being unduly interested in that part of the baby's body. She thought it was not



"nice" on her part: but it was simply natural. Her mother told her more than she knew already about a baby's birth, so that she could understand how the navel came to be as it was. The girl was interested, and understood that her question had been a right and proper one.

*If the child's life is full of interests, unhealthy curiosity, if it ever exists, is easily dealt with, simply by means of naturalness and simplicity on our part. Healthy interests drive out unhealthy ones.* What the child needs is a full and vigorous life, indoors and out; fresh air; active exercise; cold baths; regular habits. He needs to enjoy the company of his friends in a home always open to receive them; he needs to read good books, talking of them to the Father and Mother, who share his many interests. Day by day, he must be helped to gain self-mastery; and gradually, as his character grows and strengthens, any undesirable interests are driven out, in the delight and fulness of an eager life with his fellows. Any difficulties, which may recur in adolescence, are readily overcome, with our help, by the child himself, if only his early life has been trained in the right direction.

Some painful realities and aspects of life, which distress a child, without being capable of adding to his knowledge, should either be kept from the children or presented in a softened light. In dealing with these difficult questions we need to make a distinction between those facts concerning illness and crime, which are either painful or ugly in themselves, and which cannot be presented in a form which will help the child; and the facts of birth and death and of sex-differences, which can and should be so presented to the children that they are full of wonder and beauty and spiritual truth.

Of painful illness and sudden death, of crime as told in the daily papers, children should know as little as possible. A sensitive child is tortured by the possession of such knowledge; a child, who is not sensitive, is harmed by knowing of such things, and *not* being touched by them.

Yet it is not enough merely to withhold such information as we may deem unsuitable, doing nothing more, leaving the child's unsatisfied curiosity to seek satisfaction elsewhere.

If we desire that such knowledge should not be sought for,



the children's lives must be filled with strong, positive interests, so that there is no room for morbid craving; they must be given in advance beautiful conceptions of birth and death, so that, if ugly knowledge comes to them unsought, its ugliness will be readily recognized; they need to know and love God, so that as they learn, whether we will or no, of the trouble and difficulty and imperfection of life, they may be able to rely increasingly on the power of God to help to turn evil into good.

This power we can make a very real thing to the children, as they grow older, by helping them to see, in their own daily experience, that even they themselves have a similar power—God given. When a fault is committed, it is not only to be wept over: the experience must be turned to good account. It should make them stronger to resist a similar temptation the next time, by showing them where they are likely to fail when temptation comes. Every disappointment bravely borne, every pain which is not grumbled at, makes them pluckier in the future. Without some pain, some sorrow, some temptation, even though it first causes them to fail, they could not become the strong and helpful men and women they desire to become. Evil has a disciplinary value. Evil can be turned into good. "Difficulties"—as Dr. Paton was wont to say—"difficulties are our delights."

More children than we dream of have a terror of death, of burglars, of pain and sin—resulting from inappropriate and distorted knowledge, received perhaps by the merest chance and for which they were totally unprepared.

"On a summer day," writes Pater in "The Child in the House," the child "walked with his mother through a fair churchyard. In a bright dress, he rambled among the graves, in the gay weather, and so came, in one corner, upon an open grave for a child. . . . And therewith came, full-grown, never wholly to leave him, with the certainty that even children do sometimes die, the physical horror of death. . . . No benign, grave figure in beautiful soldier's things [his father, a soldier, was dead] any longer abroad in the world for his protection! Only a few poor, piteous bones; and above them, possibly, a certain sort of figure he hoped not to see. For sitting one day in the garden below an open window, he heard people talking



and could not but listen, how, in a sleepless hour, a sick woman had seen one of the dead sitting beside her, come to call her hence; and from the broken talk, evolved, with much clearness the notion that not all those dead people had really departed to the churchyard, nor were quite so motionless as they looked, but led a secret, half-fugitive life in their old homes, quite free by night, though sometimes visible in the day, dodging from room to room, with no great good-will towards those who shared the place with them. All night the figure sat beside him in the reveries of his broken sleep, and was not quite gone in the morning—an odd, irreconcilable new member of the household, making the sweet familiar chambers unfriendly and suspect by its uncertain presence.”

It is well for us that such writers as Pater can remind us of these sombre questionings that at times haunt the children, that we may realize their intense need of companionship, of comforting thoughts, in facing these great facts of life. God, the loving Father, can and will finally make all things right: good will finally overcome evil. “Please God make the burglars and witches good, for I do love them all the same”—was the nightly prayer of a sensitive lad of 5. God was great and strong and loving; in His good time, the wicked would be made righteous, and he could leave them safely in His care.

Concerning Death, children, so open minded, are ready to receive a beautiful conception. They know the sense of deep restfulness, of grateful pleasure, in lying down to sleep when they are weary at night. They sleep, and in the morning wake, “with morning faces and with morning hearts,” refreshed and strong. “God giveth His beloved sleep.” And when we grow old, and have worked hard for so long, until we are now tired out and glad to rest; or when we are weary with pain—the good God loves us so much that he puts us to sleep again—this time for a long sleep. Our bodies were worn out and had done their work; but our Spirit still lives. Such a thought presents no special difficulty to the children—“if only we don’t explain”. They know that Mother is not the *body* of Mother. Mother loves them, she plans for them and sympathizes with them—but it isn’t only her lips which love when she kisses, or only her arms that love when she embraces them



at bedtime. The thought, the love, the kindly consideration—that is really Mother—"the inner part of her that we don't understand," as the child puts it. So, when God wants some one whom the child loves, who loved the child, although the body is here asleep and will be put away, it can be a beautiful thought to the child that the loved one has only gone to God, because he was too tired to work here any more, that the heart that seems dead is really alive, and can, and does, love him still. "Whom the Gods lent us, hath rejoined the Gods"—as men said at Rome on the death of Marcus Aurelius. With our outward signs of mourning, we spoil the beauty of death to the child.

The funeral anthem is a glad Evangel;  
The good die not.

When the children ask questions which are beyond the power of the oldest and wisest amongst us to explain, we can but frankly own our inability to understand. The only answer for them, as for us, is to be found in Faith—"On the earth, the broken arcs—in the Heaven, a perfect round."

Birth, too, should be a beautiful thing. It seems, when one thinks of it, almost incredible that concerning "the most sacred, the most profound and vital of all human functions," we should leave our children to pick up their information from chance, and often ill-instructed, sources. How common it is, when they first begin to question, to tell them lies—that the baby was brought in the doctor's bag or found in the cabbage-bed or what not; or to irritate the child, and transform his natural and open interest into a concealed and morbid curiosity, by constantly postponing his questions, by the careless remark: "You can't understand that till you are bigger. You must wait. Don't bother."

Is it not our own wrong point of view that keeps us shy?<sup>1</sup> our own blindness that hides the true light from our children? Is it not our laziness in thinking how best to answer the child's

<sup>1</sup> "The differentiation of the sexes is often resented as an insult, and often treated as an indecent irrelevancy. But in this, as in other matters, it is the conduct and arguments of mankind that are indecent, insolent and irrelevant, not the foundation laid by nature" (quoted from Rev. Philip Wicksteed in an article by John Russell, M.A.: "Can the School prepare for Parenthood?").



questions which keeps us ignorant as to what reply to give? Is there not, as soon as the child really wants to know about these things, *something* of the truth which he can understand, and which, for the time being, will be sufficient for him?

"God sent the baby," we can tell them. "How" is a mystery. But is not the world full of mystery? Where does the wind come from? and the thunder and lightning? How are water and gas, even, brought into our houses? That is mysterious enough to the child. He is willing to accept mystery as such. God is familiar to him. He helps him to grow better, He takes care of him in the dark nights. But he knows that he cannot *understand* God's wonders: he just *accepts* them. God made Father and Mother, He made the daisies which spring up like magic every Spring, He made the dear kitten; and now, He has made the baby and sent him as a gift to Mother! The answer for a time is enough, and it is nearer to the truth than any other answer which we could give to the child at that age, or indeed at any age.

A boy, between 2 and 3 years old, observant beyond his years, had asked his Mother whence the babies came, and was told in simple language the primal facts of motherhood. "It's the same then as with all animals," was the little lad's quick reply.

Is it the same as with all animals? Is this what we want the child to believe? I think not. The concrete facts of the birth of a human baby are the merest superficial truths beside the wonder, the mystery, the beauty hidden in the birth itself. "Love is a lovely thing, Mother," said a little philosopher of 9 years old, "and when you come to think about it, Love is *the* thing that matters most in the world. The world couldn't go on without it, could it? For if men and women didn't love, they would not marry and have children. It's different for animals, they just have little ones without loving first." Only an answer which takes Love into account is true to the highest facts of human birth. God, who *is* Love, sent the baby.

But later, the child will need to know more. When he can realize more fully his own love for his Mother and Father, their love for one another, God's love for His children, he is ready to understand more of the special details connected with the



facts of birth. When he has seen his Father and Mother working side by side as loving comrades, not nagging and fault-finding, he can realize Love as the true source of Life. *He will then be prepared to receive the greatest of all truths.* He must have seen and understood, in his simple way, the ideal of manhood and womanhood striven for in his home, not only in his Father's and Mother's mutual respect for one another, but in the respect shown to servants and charwomen, to the workmen about the place, by brothers and sisters to each other. He must have begun to learn control over himself, not merely with regard to his bodily functions, but control over his will, his desires, his physical appetites. He must have learnt somewhat of self-knowledge, of self-reverence, of self-control, of love and reverence for others. Then, we can quietly wait for our opportunity and choose our own way of telling.

We may choose a Birthday night, we may choose Christmas Day, or chance may suddenly open to us a time to speak—but some specially glad night, when we feel very near to the child, we can tell him how a little seed was once planted in our body, like the wonderful seeds which he has planted in his garden; that the little baby-seed grew and grew, keeping close to our heart, nourished by us, loved by us all the time; until, after months of love and patient waiting, the baby came.

My own impression is that the pain of birth should not be dwelt upon. We want the child to realize that pain can be forgotten in a greater joy. We want him, and her, to understand the glad rapture of birth; the baby conceived in Love, cradled in Love in the mother's womb, and, in due time, brought forth in the glory of the Love which blots out all thought of pain. "I always wondered where my love came from; and now I know"; said a boy of 7, when he was first told of the method of his own growth.

Much detail is, I believe, undesirable. Many of the books<sup>1</sup> designed to help mothers in these matters give more information on sex questions than even grown-up people need to possess. A thorough understanding of such detail necessitates close attention being paid to the *physical* facts underlying motherhood: and this is generally harmful and rarely beneficial.

<sup>1</sup>E.g. "The Human Flower," "Baby Buds," by Ellis Ethelmer.



*It is the spiritual, which underlies the physical, which we want to realize ourselves more and more fully, and to help our children to realize.* It is not, then, any special study of physical details, either in botany, in the animal world, or in our own experience, which is needful; it is an increasing realization of the mystery and beauty of human birth at its best—as God willed it to be.

And then the Babe :

A tiny perfect sea-shell on the shore  
 By the waves gently laid (the awful waves !)—  
 By trembling hands received— a folded message—  
 A babe yet slumbering, with a ripple on its face  
 Remindful of the ocean.  
 And two twined forms that overbend it, smiling,  
 And wonder to what land Love must have journeyed,  
 Who brought this back—this word of sweetest meaning:  
*Two lives made one, and visible as one.*

And herein all Creation.

To tell our children the facts of motherhood we need, then, no special study: it is different with the facts of fatherhood. But after all, most children nowadays learn botany at school, and we need only to suggest the application of what they have already studied. They have analysed the flowers, they know their different parts; they have learnt about the pollen with its infinite number of tiny grains; about the pistil and ovary with its "little house full of very tiny children". They have heard that "when the pollen of one flower, carried away by the wind, or by the insects, fell on the pistil of another flower, the small grains died, and a tiny drop of moisture passed through the tube and entered into the house where the very tiny children dwelt; that these tiny children were like small eggs, that in each small egg was an almost invisible opening, through which a little of the small drop passed; that when this drop of pollen mixed with some other wonderful power in the ovary, both joined together to give life, and the eggs developed and became grains or fruit".<sup>1</sup>

We need, therefore, only to remind the children of such botany lessons, telling them that the pistils are like "little

<sup>1</sup> "La revendication des droits féminins" (Shafts, April, 1894, p. 237; given in Appendix to "Love's Coming of Age," by Edward Carpenter).



mothers," and the stamens like "little fathers of the fruit": the same thing, we may add, "happens to human beings, with this difference, that what is done unconsciously by the plants, is done consciously by us;" that, with us, the children should be the outcome of Love.

*If our own thoughts are clean, if our own conception of what the facts of birth should and might be is a noble one, we shall regard the telling of the children, not as a task to be shirked or faced with difficulty, but, when the time is ripe, as a high privilege to be valued.*

A few words in conclusion on the subject of childish curiosity with regard to Santa Claus, Father Christmas, Fairies and the like.

The holly and mistletoe, the Christmas tree, the giving and receiving of presents are the *visible* phenomena of Christmas time; but the generosity, the happiness, the "peace on earth and goodwill amongst men" are the spiritual facts which lie behind the material. It is these, which are embodied in Father Christmas, Santa Claus and the Christ-Child; these are but the concrete representation of spiritual facts, which, if they were not so represented, might be lost sight of by the children. Could this kindly, generous spirit of rejoicing at Christmas be better embodied than in Father Christmas or Santa Claus, rosy-cheeked, white-bearded, kindly-eyed, young in heart though old in years, revelling in the delicious surprises which the children love—of chimneys, and stockings, and midnight hours, when all are asleep! Or, could this lesson of Christmas be more fitly taught than by the Christ-Child of German legend? For Christmas is not merely old, it is also ever young—young in joy, young in generosity. The Christ-Child of Christmas embodies for us the ideals of Christianity—ideals which we can never attain, but which we may ever strive to reach. At Christmas, thinking of the Christ-Child, we may, if only for that one day, "hitch our waggon to a star"!

If, then, Father Christmas and the Christ-Child, bringing gifts, are representations of such deep underlying truths, it is well that we should cherish them for the children's sake. It cannot surely be right to tell them merely that there is no such person as Santa Claus or Father Christmas; that it is absurd to talk



about their coming down chimneys, or driving in sledges in the midnight; that Father and Mother buy the presents which they find in their stockings! The spirit of Father Christmas lives each year. It may work *through* the Father and Mother; but the Spirit is indeed real; it is the Spirit of God. If we, with our want of imagination, too early rob the child of this truth presented in its concrete form, for a time, at any rate, we rob him of part of the truth itself.

A little lad, between 3 and 4 years old, begged to know if there *really* was such a person as Father Christmas. Instead of helping him to *understand*, his Mother told him that it was only his Father and Mother who brought the gifts. The child's distress was great. "I wish I hadn't asked," he cried; "Christmas won't be a bit the same now." With more insight, could not that Mother have found some way of satisfying his questionings, keeping for him the mystery and the essence of the truth. In early childhood, the abstract must be clothed in the concrete; gradually, if we do not over-interfere, the children will cast off the latter, retaining the former, and still will understand.

The romance of fairies, gnomes and sprites is, to my mind, equally full of spiritual truth. Every flower, every leaf, every object around us has a spirit of its own, is fraught with mystery. They are more than mere material objects; they are, as it were, thoughts of the Creative Power, clothed in matter. Can the Spirit of love, of power, of beauty, of humour, embodied in the world, be more fitly expressed for the child than in this undergrowth, as it were, of tiny creatures, haunting the night, when the "humans" are asleep; this world of moral, immoral and non-moral fairy beings. If we read such stories as Barrie's "Little White Bird," with the eyes and heart of the child and the mind of the grown man or woman, we become increasingly conscious of the child's need for all this imagining, of the deep underlying truth of fairy lore.



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE DAWN OF RELIGION.

The capacity for religious feeling precedes the capacity for religious thought—The influence of environment—A closer knowledge of God is gained through the child's occupations in Nature—The child as a conscious co-worker with God—The love of God results from the effort to grow good, even as He is good—The realization of God as power and love in the Universe—Reverence for God as the Father in Heaven—The child's need of a personal God—Children's prayers.

It is by the spiritual side of our nature that we perceive there is a rule of life, which lifts our every-day experience on to a higher level. It finds its due exercise in the religious life, which consists of two things:—

(1) The feeling that there is a Higher Power, and the recognition of the way in which it manifests itself.

When the child has been taught occasionally to dwell on his experience in this respect, he soon learns to realize that the things which are not seen are of infinitely greater importance than the things which are seen.

(2) The conscious surrender of our entire selves in worship of that Higher Power, which surrender leads us to devote our energies and faculties to the service of that Power.

In this chapter, I shall not trench on the province of special theological ideas, nor of dogmas of any kind. I merely want to deal with the instinctive tendencies of the child's nature, by which he is placed in harmony with the spiritual laws of existence, with the growth in him of the spirit of reverence for the good and true, not only in things which are seen but in things which are unseen.

The child is capable of religious feeling, that is of a sense of dependence and worship, long before he is capable of religious



thought, that is of definite knowledge of God; in fact, unless this religious feeling be early fostered, his capacity for religious thought becomes increasingly difficult as he grows older. Given suitable teaching, children are, without exception, early capable of realizing that there is a higher and a lower rule of conduct, and that the sense of satisfaction, which results from obedience to the higher law, is far greater, incomparably greater, and more truly satisfying, than that which results from obedience to the lower law. The extent to which this can be realized by different children naturally depends on the fineness and depth of the child's moral nature and the fullness of his spiritual endowment. This is largely a matter of inheritance, but also to a great extent a matter of training. The result of training is, in its turn, not a little dependent on the capacity of the trainer to appeal to the child's moral and spiritual nature, and to his powers of comprehension. A capacity for religious life is innate in all children, and only dies down later for want of early nourishment. Early in life he tries to find the invisible cause at the back of the visible object. What is the wind? Where does it come from? What makes the birds fly? Who made us? He is full of eager questionings, unconsciously striving towards the discovery of the truth, that behind all visible manifestations of life is a great Invisible.

Miss Emily Poullson, in her book on "Love and Law and Child Training," speaking of babies, quotes this verse:—

Hardly you seem a life at all;  
Only a Something with hands and feet;  
Only a feeling that things are warm;  
Only a longing for something to eat.

But we know that there is nothing in later life which has not its germs in child-life, and nothing in child-life which has not its germs in the baby. He may seem only a Something, but he is a Somebody in embryo; not only the child, but, in a certain sense, the baby is father of the man. What is not yet manifested by the child must be nurtured in the child.

Long before the child is capable of religious thought, or of any self-expression in religious life, he is capable of religious feeling; and therefore he must be nurtured in the religious life from early infancy. The vague gradually becomes definite.



We must proceed as gently as possible, and with respect to this kind, as with all other kinds of development, work first only through the general influences surrounding the child. The small child receives religious impressions unconsciously, but he does respond to them, and gradually they grow from mere vague impressions to definite thoughts. As his physical condition is healthily or injuriously affected by the badness or goodness of the air which he breathes, so will the religious atmosphere by which he is surrounded determine his religious development. It therefore remains for those of us who are responsible for children to cultivate our own religious life. The muscles of our bodies grow weak, and ultimately become useless, if we do not use them; should we cease to use our teeth, they would decay and slowly rot away; the same is the case with our spiritual life. If we live in the things which are seen and temporal, in the scurry of a too busy life, for six days or more of the week, and only for an hour or so, on Sundays, turn our thoughts to the Unseen and Eternal, our capacity for religious feeling and thought will dwindle, and with it our unconscious—and I might almost say our strongest—influence on the development of the spiritual life of the children. We must fill ourselves with the truth that the Unseen is more important than the seen, though keeping in touch with the seen world. The good thoughts in us will exhibit themselves unconsciously through our actions, even through our bodily gestures and expression, silently and unconsciously making an impression on the child's heart. The child's first idea of prayer, writes Froebel, comes to him when an infant by his Mother's kneeling beside his crib in silent prayer; her bowed head and kneeling body tell of submission to, and reverence for, a power greater than herself; her tone of voice when she speaks of sacred things is far more effectual with the listener than the words she says. If she is teaching him to love goodness, teaching him that goodness is God, that God is everywhere, she does this best, not by the respect which she shows to goodness in the abstract, but by the warmth of her tribute to goodness in others around her—in the concrete. "How can I hear what you say," wrote Emerson, "when what you are is thundering in my ears?"

We can then cultivate the spiritual life in the children, first



and foremost, by cultivating it in ourselves. The spirit of reverence, which the child will catch, as it were, from us, implies a capacity for religion; *the child is capable of receiving religious impressions, long before he is capable of receiving religious instruction.*

How, further than by impressions received thus unconsciously from those around him, can the child's spiritual life be developed?

Partly through self-activity; partly, if I may put it in that way, by watching God.

I will speak first of the child's self-activity, because although, in later life, there is too much self-activity and too little of watching God, teaching in childhood, in the form of words only, is as good as thrown away. The child can only learn the power and goodness of the Spirit at the back of the Universe by, as it were, sharing in God's works, working hand in hand with Him. Such an idea presents no difficulties to a child. Norman when he was about 5 years old had got into the bad habit of incessant grumbling. Nothing was ever right. At last it was suggested that he should ask God's help. Each night, earnestly, the little laddie asked God to help him get rid of his "nasty little trick"—his own method of explaining to God what he wanted. The prayer expressed genuine desire and earnest faith, the boy was trying harder, and in a few days, he began to improve. One night, when his Mother was hearing his prayers, she expressed her gladness at his improvement.

"When you ask God to help you do anything," he said, "you have to try your very hardest yourself, then He does the last little bit you can't manage. If He did it all, it would be spoiling!"

The same idea was expressed by an older boy of 9, in one of those moments of self-revelation which are rare in childhood. "I feel," he said, "as if God was like a nurse or a Mother. If you ask Him to make you good, you don't have to just ask and forget all about it and leave it to Him. You have to try your hardest—just as you have to try to do any hard job for yourself, and your Nurse or your Mother helps you to finish."

This way of looking at prayers for goodness was probably not originated by the children, something must have been said at



some time to give them such an idea—but the idea once suggested seemed natural to them. They responded instinctively to the suggestion that they were co-workers with God.

Such a thought can be made use of in developing the child's feeling of wonder and reverence for God's works in the Universe. What the child has tried to do for himself, he understands and appreciates when done by others. Donald once asked his Mother what seemed to her the most wonderful thing in the whole world. After thinking a minute, she replied: "The birth of a little baby". The boy knew somewhat of this greatest of all miracles, but even so, it did not strike him as so very wonderful, in the way it did an older person. "Oh, I don't," he said, "I think that the way they make gas and bring it along pipes into everybody's houses, and the way it gives us light in the night is far more wonderful. Sometimes when I am getting off to sleep at night, I think about it and try to imagine how they do it." Man's work struck the child as more wonderful than God's work, because, by trying to do similar things himself, he had some inkling of their difficulty.

If the children are to understand God as Creator, it must be through their own occupations in Nature, through the planting of seeds, the tending of animals, through their own experiences, their own personal activity. Ruth and Mary, about 7 years old, shared between them a flower-bed, and in this bed they, like the other children in the school, had sown a few peas and beans.<sup>1</sup> Every day they would grub up the earth with their little hands, to see why the seeds did not come up, much as Budge and Toddy, having buried the dead bird, dug up the earth to find out when the bird went to Heaven. In the other children's beds, little green seedlings were beginning to peep above the ground, and these two inquisitive little ones looked sadly at them, and then at their own beds, where nothing was yet showing. It was explained to them that if they wanted their own seeds to grow, they must be patient and leave them alone for a while. So every day they visited their garden, and, with great self-control, refrained from touching the soil—and at last, one morning, they were found kneeling by

<sup>1</sup> This story is told from one given by Baroness von Bülow in her book "Child and Child Nature".



the bed, in a perfect transport of wonder and delight, at the tiny green blades which were just peeping up above the ground.

They had seen plants growing often enough, but they had not paid much attention, because they themselves had not taken any part in sowing and caring for the seedlings. But now, for the first time, they were consciously face to face with this wonder of Nature; yesterday there was nothing to be seen, to-day little green leaves were peeping through the soil! "Was it you, children," the teacher asked, "who made them grow?" "No," said Mary, "God did it;" and then the teacher told them how God made the sun shine, so as to warm the earth, then sent the dew and rain to soften the ground, and so helped the seeds to grow. Little Ruth and Mary were keenly interested; and later in the day, when the children were matting, out of the fullness of her heart, Ruth asked if she could give hers to God!

"For the development of religion, the teaching of visible phenomena must come before that of words; the Creator must first reveal Himself in His visible works, before He can be apprehended as the Invisible God of our spirits." We are consciously reverent, if we know ourselves to be working with God. In a great hospital in Paris, on the frieze round the operating theatre, are painted these words: "Man dressed the wound, God healed it".

The child's spiritual nature, then, is developed by self-activity, both in working with God in the realm of Nature, and in the doing of righteousness. The little lad of 5, Lewis, who wanted to be a Christian soldier, was helped by his ideal, when there was trouble which he had to bear manfully. He was fighting on God's side, and, as a faithful soldier in the Christian Army, he was able in his childlike way to understand and love the Great Head. Neville, when he was about the same age, on some particular occasion did not want to be unselfish; he resisted all efforts made to get him to do the unselfish deed, and the matter was, for the time being, put aside. He was a child who, for a while, every now and again, was full of questions on spiritual matters, and then, for a while again, lived wholly in this world. On this particular occasion, something made him ask "the question, "What is God's Spirit?" He was told that it was God's Spirit



inside us that made us do good and loving actions, and think good and true thoughts. Not realizing the possible connexion with what had gone before—the selfish action on his part—the explanation went on: "It is God's Spirit inside you that makes you act unselfishly when it is hard, that makes you tell the truth when you have done wrong; God's spirit grows strong in you and you grow more like God, every time you do the right." "I see," he answered, and nothing more was said. But he was quietly pondering. In a few minutes he said: "I want the good spirit to grow strong in me; Marjorie may have that toy".

The child's spiritual nature can only develop by self-activity; he who would know the Creator must exercise his own creative power, he who would know God as good must himself try to be good. The doing of what is good is the most potent tie between the Creator and creature. *The child needs to realize that he is a co-worker in goodness with God, that God needs his enlistment among those fighting for right.* "There is something else," says Froebel, "which early awakens in your child a respect for goodness, and a feeling of emulation and aspiration to attain unto goodness—that is, to *be* good."

But the child must be further trained to watch God, to realize that, behind all the visible manifestations of life, there is an Invisible Power, that this great, loving, Unseen Power exists, not only in the Universe of Nature, but in the child's own life and that of those around him. The first groping after the Unseen is an important moment in the child's life; but the power of the Unseen in the world without must be realized, before the child can at all apprehend the power of the Unseen over the world within, in his own nature.

The first of these unseen forces which he notices is often that of the wind. He sees the smoke blown from the chimneys; the weathercock turns this way and that, with no hand to move it. He feels himself carried off his feet, yet no one lifts him. We let him imitate the moving weathercock, not merely for the sake of the mechanical imitation, but because, when he imitates, he more nearly understands. These first impressions matter; they are the "root fibres of the child's early understanding of the Unseen". It is an unseen force within him



which moves his hand; so there must be some unseen force which turns the weathercock. This sequence of thoughts occurs naturally to the child; it does not need to be pointed out. Unprompted, he compares his own powers with the power exercised by God. The window in Norman's bedroom—he was about 4 years old—had been left open, and was blown out during the day by a strong gale of wind. The window had been mended, but he was nervous at having to sleep there again, and comforted himself at night by asking God to take care of him. "Please God," he prayed, "don't let any more wind out to-night, so as my window won't be blown in"—as if the winds of God were similar to the breath, with which he himself cooled his morning porridge!

Let the works of Nature, then, be shown to the child in such a way that he may dimly realize the wonderful side of Science, that is beyond all explanation. "Dame Nature is the greatest of all teachers with her illuminated text-books of field and forest, sea and sky." Let the child realize that the greatest things in life are invisible. There are many stories which we can tell the child through which this truth may be felt by him, and these should be used rather than those in which it is told to them. Just as we, in after years, grow to see, with ever greater clearness, the invisible power at work throughout all history, grow to see that in the end the battle is not to the strong nor the race to the swift, that "one with God is a majority"—so the child in his own life history, in his experiences in the nursery, home and school, may unconsciously gain the conviction that God rules there also, that right wins and not might.

What does this mean for us in the details of their life? We must see to it that the children do not feel that we win in nursery struggles just because we are stronger and cleverer than they, but rather that the higher law of love and order, as working in and through us, triumphs. Then they will be ready to believe that, in ordering the world, God is not an arbitrary despot any more than we, but a wise and loving Ruler. The child will gain his thoughts about God more from what we are than from what we say. We must let him see that we hate to punish, that we are sad at wrong-doing; that we sympathize with joy, that we are patient and loving with the sinner, and only hate the sin. If we meet true repentance half way, the



child can enter into the Parable of the Prodigal Son. We must do the right cheerfully ourselves and appreciate right-doing in the children. We must let them realize that all are called upon to obey the Higher Law, that even God respects the laws which He Himself has made. We do not need to give reasons for all our actions, but we must give the children cause for, and help them to develop, that faith in us, which they will need to have in God, when they are faced with the difficulties of the world. We must let goodness, as far as in us lies, pervade the moral order of things.

So much, then, for the cultivation in the child of the realization of God as power and love in the universe. But the Power that made the worlds, that made light and darkness, and the daisies under the child's feet, made the child himself and those whom he loves, and takes care of all the creatures of His Hand. "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground but the Heavenly Father knoweth it." How is the child to gain love and reverence for God as the Father in Heaven?

Many children early show their need of a personal God. "Who'll take care of me when there's nobody with me?" "Why can't the witches be made good? Can any one make bad people good? I don't like them to be wicked." "Where did Baby come from? Who brought her here?" "Why do you love me? Who makes you love me?" "Who made the daisies?" "Where did I come from, and where shall I go to when I die?" asked Helen Keller, the American girl, who was blind and deaf and dumb. This same child one day wrote on her tablet for her teacher—"I wish to write about things I do not understand. Who made the earth and the seas and everything? What makes the sun hot? Where was I before I came to Mother? I know that plants grow from seeds which are in the ground, but I am sure people do not grow that way. I never saw a child-plant. Little birds and chickens come out of eggs, I have seen them. What was the egg before it was an egg? Why does not the earth fall, it is so very large and heavy? Tell me something that Father Nature does? (She was familiar with Mother Nature.) May I read the book called the Bible? Please tell your little pupil many things when you have much time."

Some of their questions the children cannot formulate, it is



a help to them when they can formulate them, but there is much in life to puzzle and to trouble them. Some of them show an instinctive need for a Power, which will work in them as it works in the universe, though I do not think all children have this need, and they are often not conscious of it even when they possess it.

This consciousness of a God, in personal relation to the child, is a great help to some children very early in life. Perhaps I shall make this need clearer, if I use an analogy. It is suggested by Matthew Arnold's poem, in which he describes *The Life of Man*.

A wanderer is man from his birth.  
He was born in a ship  
On the breast of the River of Time;

Let us, for a few minutes, think of the babies as gliding each in his own tiny vessel on the River of Time. The baby at the start cannot manage his own craft. There is much to learn. The tiny vessels are perfect in their mechanism. There is the propelling force of impulse and power, capable of infinite development and strong even in early days; there is capacity for control; even this tiny vessel can be made by us to proceed along an ordered path. The inner force is there, and we can supply the outward conditions on which all growth depends. Parents, nurses and teachers are the pilots on board, controlling certain impulses, encouraging others, and in this way strengthening the inner mechanism of the boat, and adjusting the sails to the outside breezes of circumstances and environment.

The tiny owners of the vessels lie there—for a while passive spectators, but not for long. A very few months and they begin to be agents. Self-consciousness begins to develop. "I a girlie, Nurse—I a girlie, Nurse," the thought constantly recurs in the mind of a mite of 2 years old, and she is glad in the thought. Early, self-will begins to show itself. The children feel their own power and they want to guide their own vessels. "By-self—by-self," is the cry. We, the pilots, instruct them in little ways first. We show them how to adjust the sails, how to steer. Sometimes they are ready to learn. But they are wayward—the owners of these wonderful vessels. Sometimes they prefer to try their own way and for a while we



leave them. The vessels flounder miserably, and we must again take the management into our hands.

But all the time, we are conscious that we must not overdo our work as a pilot, that the children must learn to pilot their own vessels. We must not guide too much nor too long, better that the vessel should flounder occasionally. So, as we have seen, we gradually teach the children. We make them do some things again and again in the management of their boat, until they become easy. We are forming habits. We teach them habits of accuracy in thought, word and deed. We train them in the habit of attention. Our early training in order and neatness will have developed in them a capacity for orderliness of mind, which will be a great help to them. We train them not to let emotions pass away in mere feeling, but always to take shape in action. This helps them not to drift, swayed first here, then there, by emotional circumstances. We train them to obey our commands, in order that through learning to obey they may become worthy to command. Gradually, more and more, we leave to them the management of their own vessels, though the pilot is watching, never very far off. But—and here we come back to the need of the cultivation of the spiritual life—many children, when thus left alone, now and again feel their powerlessness in the face of the strong forces, either within their own natures or in outward circumstances,—forces which they know are driving their vessels wrong and which they cannot control. They cry out for help—such help as even the pilot, with all the will in the world, cannot give them.

Stephen was about 4 and was prone to fits of rudeness and anger. One day, there had been a particularly sad exhibition of temper, and his Mother, thinking he might get help from prayer—she had tried with all her might to teach him self-control, but failure was frequent—added, when he had finished his prayers at night, that she wanted to say a few words to God for him. "Don't tell Him about to-day," urged the poor little lad, his conscience pricking him at once, but when his Mother told him that He knew without being told, and was so sorry, and wanted to help—"If He knows," he added, "I am glad. Do ask Him to help me, I can't manage." Terrible fits of passion may occasionally be quelled as by a



miracle, by the asking of help, if the child possesses faith in God. Prayer calms the tumult instantly. The child is conscious of his own weakness and feels the need of God's strength.

Yet another story, showing the help to a child of the knowledge of a personal God; it is amusing, but pathetic also. Leonard, about 4 years old, had a sister as well as brothers, but had always a decided preference for the boys. From the time he was a tiny tot of 2, he always seemed to have a natural objection to girls. If they came to play in his nursery, he would knock them down if he got the chance, and take their toys away—bully them in his baby way. This feeling almost amounted to an instinctive dislike and did not disappear as he grew older. It was hard on his little sister Eva, who was particularly devoted to him, to hear that girls were "horrid," he would give her away to anybody; to hear him lamenting that the family was not all boys. When he grew up, he would sometimes say, he would ask God to give him a hundred boys for children, and not one girl. Girls were all right when they grew up and became mothers and nurses, if only they never had to be girls! One night, his Mother spoke to him seriously about this, how unkind it was, etc., but he persisted that he could not help it, he felt that way and had to say it. "Would you like to feel differently?" his Mother asked. He thought he would. "Well then," his Mother said, "why don't you ask God to help you? Ask Him, and make up your mind that, while He is helping you, you will never say, and will try not even to think, that you don't like them." Leonard agreed. Solemnly, each night, he asked God to help him to learn to love little girls. Earnestly he tried through the day to say nothing to the contrary—it was often hard to check himself, but it appealed to him as fair that he must keep his side of the bargain. One day, after about ten days of prayer and effort, he was playing happily with his sister. Suddenly, the thought flashed through his mind! He ran across to his Mother, "Mother, God is helping me to learn to love little girls;" with God's help, he felt he was winning in that struggle. Eva was eager to know what he had whispered. "Shall I tell her?" he asked. His Mother gave assent. He put his arms round her, and whispered: "I have been asking God to help me to learn to love you, and I do now".



The child needs the help of a Power outside himself, whom he believes is always with him, knows his inmost thoughts, understands him, loves him, "keeps care of him," as the children say, and helps him when he tries to be good—he needs to know and love God.

The instances, which I have given, tell of brief struggles, of a momentary consciousness of the great need of God. They are fleeting glimpses into himself on the part of the child, a sudden and brief realization of the forces controlling his life. They should never be more than momentary in early childhood, they are not to be recalled, they are seen and treasured as a sign that the little vessel has its head turned and kept, as far as may be, in the right direction, they are our reward for our faithful labour, as the first pilot of the boat.

Not only, however, is the child conscious of his personal need of God, but some children are, now and again, painfully conscious of the limitations and imperfections of life, and need to believe that there is a controlling and compelling and protecting force in the universe. Robert, when about 4 years old, touched by the thought of the suffering endured by the soldiers in the South African War, was soothed by his prayer each night: "Please take care of the soldiers in the hospital, and give them bobil to make them better"—he had seen the advertisement of Bovril, where the hospital nurses are tending the wounded men. Lewis, the 5-year-old Christian Soldier, always prays: "Please try and make the burglars and the witches good, although I do love them all the same". Were it not that he believed God could ultimately achieve this end, and that the witches in the fairy stories were only apparently put to an end when cast into the fire, most of such stories would give him pain and make him dream at night.

These stories all illustrate the one point, which I touched on at the end of the analogy—the child's need for a Power—a loving, all-knowing, all-protecting Power, outside himself. It is so much easier than it seems to give to the child a simple religion of this kind, that is, if we believe it ourselves; the child does not question overmuch, he does not need any religious doctrine. It is easy to a child, with his strong imagination, to love One whom he has never seen, when he knows that that One made all the beautiful flowers, the animals he plays with



in the farmyard, Mother and Father and all good friends—that all the child sees around him of happiness, love, beauty and goodness are from God. He is “*such* a good God,” the children say, “I do love Him so.” “God is a good old chap to take care of everybody,” a little boy of 4 once said, in an outburst of feeling. “I love Him as much as Father and Mother, because He gave them to me,” I heard Maurice say, when he was 5. This same little fellow, happy in the possession of a particularly loving nature, out of the goodness of his heart, unprompted, each night says: “Please God, thank you for this good gift of loving.” Where the thought came from, how he came to express it so, his Mother could not tell. But it becomes part of the children’s natures to love and give thanks to the Giver of all good things, to reverence Him and His gifts in their baby way; and this is the first step towards self-reverence.

Many of the stories which I have given are connected with children’s prayers. Just a few words in conclusion on the meaning and value of prayer in childhood. Prayer is communion with God; prayer is “the highest expression of the inner gathering up of all the powers of the soul”. It therefore demands concentration of thought, an effort of imagination, the feeling of gratitude and love. How are these to be acquired by the tiny child?

In the first place, the words of the prayer, if words have to be suggested, must be in touch with the child’s experience and feelings.

In the second place, such experience must be recalled, and the feeling of love re-awakened, as a preliminary to prayer. Only in this way can prayer be real on the part of the child.

In the third place, we should remember that a reverent attitude helps to engender concentration of thought and a feeling of reverence.

We have lately become increasingly conscious of the way in which mind and soul act upon the body; it is not so easy for us to realize that the body also acts upon the soul, that outward gesture and attitude react upon inward feeling. But this is a fact—and a scientific fact—which we need to realize. The attitude of the child helps to generate his religious feeling. The child, when he prays, should then fold his hands reverently,



and close his eyes. "The gentle folding of the hands, with an external quietness, impresses the little soul with an inner feeling of collected force or unity, which is the germ of that great and strong religious conviction, which leads us to speak of God as the Life in whom we live and move and have our being."

*But, in the cultivation of the child's spiritual life, as in all else, do not be in a hurry, do not try to force the child.* Children are not ready for prayer at any fixed period in their lives. In some, the instinct of affection and gratitude is late in developing. If they do not greatly love the Father whom they have seen, how can they love a Father whom they have not seen? And if they do not love, are they ready to pray? The first condition of all religion is merging of self-love into other love. "Love goes before faith. Not to love is not to believe, for it is love which makes us feel that the object is worthy of our faith." Bit by bit, in the case of such children, we need to develop the loving side of their nature, and watch for our opportunity to tell them of God. Some children can truly pray before they are 3, others not till much later. But the earlier, the better, if the prayer is real. Until they can pray themselves, we must let them see that we pray for them. But when they begin to be capable of unselfish love towards those around them, begin to grow in their power of imagination,—on some specially glad day, when we are tucking them up at night, we can remind them of all the glad things in their lives—recall the joys of that day, the beautiful sunshine, the flowers in the garden, the romp with Father, the kisses and the hugs at bedtime, till the little one glows with conscious joy! Then we can ask: "Who gives you all this joy? Who makes Father and Mother love you? Who makes you love them—the loving that makes you so glad?" We can tell them it is God who gives all good things; would they like to thank God? If the children respond, and they will respond if we have chosen the right moment—with their eyes shut and hands reverently folded, we let them say their first spontaneous prayer: "Thank you for making me happy, please make everybody happy"—is one such first prayer. The form of prayer may depend upon the child, and our suggestions to the child—but we must see that it is real.

The consciousness and love of God can only gradually grow and develop, but the seed has been planted, and we can tend



it carefully. Above all, we need to see that the feeling is kept alive. Frances' prayers were very often more or less a matter of form, until one day she had a longed-for paint box given to her. Her heart was very full of gratitude, and the flood of feeling that night made her prayer a real thanksgiving. "Please thank you, God, for putting it into Father's head to give me that paint box, and thank the people who sold it to him at the shop, and the people who made it, and—You Who helped them all." Back and back went her mind in spontaneous thankfulness to each one, and finally to God, the Great First Cause. There must be the outpouring of the heart. We must not allow it to become a habit to approach God, in outward forms only, at a set time, as part of the order of the day.

In conclusion, I want once again to refer to the need on our part to keep in touch with the child's world. We should tell him of a God whom he can understand and love, not of a Being too vast and impersonal for his childlike comprehension. We should draw his attention to God's work only in the beautiful things in life, the mystery of sin and suffering will trouble him soon enough. We should not "force him out of his unconsciousness into self-consciousness by demanding of him reflection, by checking the joy of his receptiveness, by too much teaching, too much forcing; but let him remain for a time ignorant of himself, and abide in his Heavenly Father's hands; let him live naturally, and drink in his wisdom and his religion from the influences which God makes play around him. Above all [we should] not demand of him, as many do, convictions of sin . . . [but] let him begin with natural religion . . . [and] see that he knows God as Love, and Beauty and Sympathy."<sup>1</sup> Above all, we need to remember that it is not by what we say, but by what we are, that we really teach the children.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. S. A. Brooke.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### SOME DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHILDREN.

Need for recognition of individuality—Marked differences in children—Dominant characteristics: Strength of will and determination (masterfulness, tenacity of purpose); Emotions; Keeness of reasoning faculties; Exceptional responsiveness—"Average" children—Nervous children—Unimpressible children—Sulky children—Mischievous children—Passionate children—Training is a matter of insight rather than restriction.

It has been said that we are all born original, but all die copies. In one sense this is true, though it is not the whole truth. We are "all born original" in the sense that we are all born different, capable of being ourselves and no one else. But some are born with a big self, so to speak, one in many respects so different from the other selves around, that they feel, from the start, in conflict with the world in which they live. Others are less conscious of the strength of their own individuality; they are not so intensely aware of the clash between their impulses and desires, and outward circumstances; it is easier for them to work in harmony with others. Some are actually wanting in individuality, so that they act too readily on the suggestion of another self, they possess too little initiative. "We all die copies," in the sense that we must all, to a certain extent, reflect in our characters the influences to which we have been subject; but weaker natures merely reflect and do no more, they reflect exactly what they receive. Strong natures only reflect what they have thoroughly absorbed, and modified according to their special character.

Now, this individuality *must be recognized and understood*. It is a highly complex product, and we need more than mere vague observation, however sympathetic, before we can attempt to estimate the fundamental differences between different types



of character. Wherein lies the difference between different children? Why is one child so delightful to deal with and another so difficult and trying? Why is one lad so full of mischief, another so passionate and headstrong, another so dreamy that he gets into difficulties at every turn? Why is one so responsive, another so self-centred? one so independent, another so dependent? Are the differences between different children so great and so fundamental that the more we study them, the more we are driven back to the conclusion that all children are unique, that the similarity between them is hardly worth mentioning, and any classification according to "type" unreal? I think not. The more we observe their fundamental differences, the more clearly do we grow to recognize their deep and equally fundamental similarities. Our grouping may be vague and indefinite, for natural groups have no sharp lines of demarcation. Children, who appear by nature to belong to one class, may, as the result of training, or as the result of inherited tendencies which show themselves at a later stage of development, pass out of this class into another. Some children appear to belong equally to more than one class, for natural groups, as Sir F. Galton has aptly expressed it, have centres but no border lines. But there are undoubtedly certain natural and familiar groups, certain distinct types of character in childhood. The very language, which we habitually use in speaking of the children, referring to them as clever, strong willed, excitable or responsive, implies on our part an underlying, though unconscious, classification.

What, then, are these fundamental natural groups?

1. Children in whom *strength of will and determination* is the most marked characteristic; generally speaking, these are more or less self-sufficient.

2. Those whose characters are determined by the *strength of their emotions*—these may be depressing and show themselves in moodiness and taciturnity—or they may be exhilarating and show themselves in a joyous temperament. According as they belong to the one or the other category, children are reserved or expansive. In this emotional group, most artistic natures are found.

3. Those who are marked by the *keenness of their reasoning faculties*. Frequently, these exhibit strength of will in addition



to keenness of mind, and, if lacking in emotion, they tend, in adult life, to become cold abstract thinkers.

4. Children who stand out, not so much on account of any marked strength of will, emotion or intellect, but on account of their *exceptional responsiveness*. These may also be emotional or discriminative, but, in childhood, they are only very occasionally self-determined. Such children, owing to their extreme responsiveness, are often very excitable.

5. Those whom we may call "*average*" children, who do not exhibit any one quality in excess. Sufficiently responsive to be readily trained, yet not lacking in will power, so as to be weak in the face of temptation, these children are comparatively easy to bring up.

6. Those who are weak in some definite direction—exceptionally nervous children, wanting in the power of self-control; "scatter-brained" children, lacking in the power of concentrating their attention; children wanting in will power or the capacity for affection, or persistently obstinate, because weak in reasoning power.

1. The first group of children, consisting of those whose most strongly marked characteristic lies in their strength of will and determination, includes two distinct sections. Some children, for instance, show their strength of will in *masterfulness*, in the instinctive desire to lead, to be in authority. Others, not necessarily masterful, show their will chiefly in the *tenacity* with which they adhere to any purpose on which they have set their minds, overcoming all obstacles, one by one, in the attainment of their end. The strong purposive will is there, but the end which they have in view and for which they strive with such persistence, is not the attainment of mastery over their fellows, it may be even an abstract idea. This strength of will is needed to do the work of a Darwin. It is needed by great explorers, such as Nansen or Livingstone,—but the will which enables such men to pursue an end, alone and unaided, is different from that which is bound to find its outlet in organizing and commanding—the will of a Duke of Wellington, a Gladstone or a Disraeli. The child, who can will to pursue an "end" with unflagging zeal, need not be masterful; but the born ruler of men is almost of necessity masterful as a child, and, in all probability, rebellious.



Geoffrey shows his determination in the way in which he can work steadily for a prize at school, giving up pleasures which come by the way for the sake of his work. He has no difficulty in finishing what he has begun, if he has ever cared about the making of it. He is not quarrelsome, not difficult to manage, as long as we are not opposing him in the purpose on which he has set his will. He has the strong will which shows itself in *purposive action*, but he does not desire to be a leader of others; he does not instinctively rebel against authority as such, if he can pursue his own ends uninterruptedly. He belongs to the group in which we place Huxley and Nansen, rather than Gladstone and the Duke of Wellington. He has the makings of a discoverer and a path-finder.

Contrast with Geoffrey, Duncan's strong masterful nature. He wants to rule rather than to be ruled, he only submits to authority, because freedom can be found only within the limits of the law. He will not be "driven". In early childhood, he was pugnacious, the mutual give and take of friendship came hardly to him. He was passionate and rebellious, until he had gained self-control and learnt reasonableness. Until he learnt to put himself on the side of the law, he could not obey graciously. Peggy, too, is a child of this same type. "Did you say I was to go upstairs, den I just won't!" she said, when she was not yet 4—yet she was able to obey comparatively readily if she were given a few seconds in which she could *think*, so that she had the chance of ordering herself, instead of being ordered. "Just wait, I'm thinking," she urged. "Now I've thinked and I want to go upstairs." She must act upon her own initiative. "I don't want to be good," she says, when *told* to be good, and she will submit willingly to punishment in order to get her own way in naughtiness. "I'll want to be good presently, but not yet. I'll tell you when." And so she waits quietly, till you hear her voice calling: "Now I'm ready to be good;" and good she is, when she chooses goodness of her own accord.

"I hate to be *told* to do things and I hate to be copied, I like to be myself," was Robert's verdict, when he was 9 years old. One morning, at breakfast, he was asked if he wished to drink his milk hot or cold. "What is Margaret going to have? I'll have the opposite," was his reply. But Margaret was of this same type and refused to say first. Things were at a



standstill. At last she said to her brother: "If I promise to have something different to you, will you say first?" To that he agreed and chose cold milk, and she took hot. *She* had not yielded to his desire that she should say first; but *he* was also satisfied because he had not been copied!

Jack and Cuthbert, both aged 7, were thrown much together one term at a boarding-school. Cuthbert was an old-fashioned little lad, an only child. "To begin with, Jack and I didn't get on at all well together," he explained to Jack's mother. "You see, he always wanted his way and I wanted mine, and so we quarrelled. I said I'd rather play by myself and the animals (a pet dog and cat), and he said he would too!" Gradually, however, they began to "hit it off" a bit better, to be able to take turns in choosing, (neither of them ever forgot when it was their turn), but they were always amusingly ready to be on the defensive. "I don't want to be always in the same place as Jack, and doing what he does!" was Cuthbert's remark, when they were sent off to play together. "I'm sure I don't want him to either," Jack chimed in!

2. The second group includes those whose characters are ruled *by the strength of their emotions*—moody and reserved, or joyous, expansive natures. "Sulky" children belong to this class, being over-sensitive, their feelings are readily hurt. When injured, they draw back, as it were, into themselves; "they draw the latch, sit by the fire and spin," and their reserve is such that they give their neighbours no chance to enter in. For them, the capacity for self-expression must somehow be gained; as long as they hug their consciousness of injury in silence, such consciousness of injury grows.

Their characters cannot develop, as they are capable of developing, till their natures expand, and, in the joy of expression, they lose their tendency to dwell within themselves.

In contrast to these, the joyous expansive natures stand out. Of these, Walt Whitman, as a boy, affords a striking example. Joyous and affectionate, though wilful and passionate; full of the keen zest for life, and possessing an unflagging capacity for fun and adventure; not a solitary child, though at intervals living apart in a world of emotion which none could share with him; a clever lad, full of ideas; brimming over with affection,



in childhood as in manhood, for every one around him. His was a nature strong in will power, strong in intellect, but the whole dominated by a strength of emotion, which is rarely paralleled.

Most artistic natures fall into this second group. Whitman is at the centre, a strongly marked harmonious character, strong in emotion, but also strong on all other sides of his character. Amiel and Rousseau, though emotional like Whitman, and intensely sensitive to impressions, were, unlike him, lacking in initiative and in will power, and their experience in childhood served to deepen the emotional element of their nature, rather than to strengthen those intellectual and volitional elements wherein they were already lacking. Whitman had a wise mother, Rousseau and Amiel both lost their mothers in early childhood, and there was no one to correct their deficiencies. Lord Morley tells us that Rousseau, naturally dreamy and imaginative, as a small boy, sat up reading novels with his Father night after night, the whole night through, both of them only recalled to the world of the senses with the grey light of the dawn. Various bad impulses, which tempted him in his early boyhood, were permitted to develop unchecked, till, in later life, he became a slave to them.

Of Amiel's childhood, it would be intensely interesting to know more; to be able to trace the way in which a will, probably weak in boyhood, became gradually weaker through lack of use, until in manhood he could declare that practical life made him afraid. "To love, to dream, to feel, to understand—all these are possible to me, if only I may be dispensed from *willing*—I am always preparing but never accomplishing. I have too much imagination, conscience and penetration, and not enough character." He was a sensitive, impressionable boy of delicate health; disposed, even in childhood, to take a more or less dreamy view of life; and thoughtful beyond his years. All through his life he was extraordinarily receptive, capable of "effacing himself and his own individuality in the presence of the thing to be understood and absorbed". He accomplished little—had the early influences of his childhood been different, we may allow ourselves to ask, could not his weakness have been turned to strength?

Mr. A. C. Benson, the author of the "Upton Letters," gives



an interesting study of the development of an emotional and artistic temperament in his book, "Beside Still Waters". The boy in the book was self-centred and brooding during early childhood, possessing a rare capacity for appreciating Nature, weaving fancies round every tree and flower. He is untouched at first by any human affection. Gradually his sympathies developed in response to people around him; affection for others began to play a part in his life, and the love of Nature and the love of human beings developed side by side, the joy received from the one enhancing the joy received from the other. It is an interesting study in the psychology of the artistic temperament.

3. The third group consists of those who are marked by the keenness of their reasoning faculties. In the centre, we might place those who pass a childhood, such as is recorded of Clerk Maxwell, Spencer, Huxley, Sidgwick and others. Huxley, as a boy, "had an inquiring mind and a singularly early turn for metaphysical speculation". He read everything he could lay hands on in his Father's library, and, when a boy of 12, used to "light his candle before dawn, pin a blanket round his shoulders, and sit up in bed to read Hutton's 'Geology'". An interesting glimpse of the child, who was father to the man, is given in a fragmentary journal begun when he was 15. "What have I done in the way of acquiring knowledge since January?" he writes in June, when 16 years old, and he makes a list of projects begun and projects completed; then he adds—unconsciously revealing his character—"I must get on faster than this. I must adopt a fixed plan of studies, for unless this is done I find time slips away without knowing it, and let me remember this, that it is better to read a little and thoroughly, than cram a crude, undigested mass into my head, though it be great in quantity." In boyhood, as in manhood, his character was shown in a deep capacity for affection, a strong will, thoroughness, energy, keenness of interest, "not only in pure knowledge, but in human life," a passionate sincerity and a fearless love of truth.

Of Sidgwick's childhood, but little is recorded. He was fortunate in possessing a wise and sensible mother, and his childhood was happy and uneventful. He was the inventive



genius of the nursery and a general favourite, both at school and at home, from the gaiety and vivacity of his disposition. Exceptionally clever, an omnivorous reader, good at games in which intellectual rather than physical powers were required, he was a thoughtful, studious and receptive boy. His serene early life, free from passion and headstrong action, foretells the keen, but calm and steady, work of later years. His was a nature of deep emotion, of artistic sensibility, with a strong will to do whatever reason demanded, but dominated by his intellectual powers, governed by a love of truth and an untiring search after it.

Neither Huxley nor Sidgwick was lacking in emotion. It is, however, possible for children in this highly reasoning class to be so conspicuously lacking in emotion as to become, if this side of their nature is not developed, cold, abstract thinkers of the type of Herbert Spencer. His was a life entirely organized on a rational and scientific basis—"a kind of nightmare of an entirely rational world," writes Mr. Masterman. He was never able to lose himself in emotion. Even after his Mother's death—his first grief—he could criticize and weigh his emotion. In early years, his feeling for children, he tells us, was "tepid"—a marked contrast to Huxley. In later life, however, when in ill health,\* he decided to try whether the society of children might help him to kill time, he is surprised to find, as a result, the "philoprogenitive instinct" awakening within him. In his autobiography, he tells us that, one day in the train, he closely observed a man who was in terrible misery. "As I continued to contemplate the face," he writes, "and to understand all which its expression of distress meant, the pity excited in me went to the extent of causing that constriction of the throat which strong feeling sometimes produces." The capacity for emotion was there, but never yielded to; reason dominates and masters all.

This over-development of one side of a nature to the exclusion of others, Herbert Spencer himself puts down to a somewhat morbid ancestry. It may quite as likely be due to the incomplete home conditions surrounding his early life, so that the social impulses of his nature were not then called forth, and therefore failed him at a later stage, when he himself was wise enough to realize the need of them. He tells us that he



had had a longing since boyhood to have his affections called out. "I have been in the habit," he writes, "of considering myself but half alive, and have often said I hoped to begin to live some day." That day never came, yet the desire shows that his was, not so much a nature lacking in emotional capacity, as one in whom capacity was somehow or other never drawn out. Owing to our ignorance of the laws of heredity, we often put down to inheritance what may be due to early influences. It seems natural to one who writes his own autobiography to trace character to heredity alone, for he can see the developed characters of his elders; but he cannot fully analyse the surroundings of his early childhood, and this makes him lose sight of the possibilities which lie hidden in his own character, even in spite of heredity, for becoming other than he did. "My friends see what I might have been," wrote Amiel, "I see what I am." The same is true of Spencer.

4. Exceptionally responsive children constitute the fourth group—wax to receive, but not always marble to retain. These may also be emotional or intellectual, but they are only very occasionally self-determined. Although this group of children stands apart from the others in this one respect, many of them are also either in the second or third group, strong in emotion or in intellect. Or they may be found among those who are weak in some part of their nature—weak because they are too responsive—weak in the power of initiative—capable of response to impressions from without, but incapable of suggestions to action on their own part. Amiel was one of these extraordinarily receptive characters; Cowper, Rousseau, Walt Whitman, all were responsive beyond the ordinary.

Such exceptionally responsive children are easy to train if we only go to work in the right way, they are quick to catch on to our suggestions. But they need to develop a strong sense of right and wrong, a clear moral judgment—otherwise their very capacity for response may prove a drawback, when they leave the nursery for a bigger world where they can enjoy comparative freedom. Too responsive a character, if also too docile, takes shape readily and seems fit for life early, but breaks down when faced with difficulties and temptations. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," was the verdict of a father of such,



who had not trained his children wisely, but had left them to develop unaided. Excessively responsive children are often unstable, readily thrown off their balance; yet they may acquire strength of character if only they can gain self-control. There is excessive response to our suggestions; we must therefore see that, bit by bit, they learn to rely upon themselves, to hold fast to their own ideas and not be carried away by ours. Responsiveness is good, but it must not be allowed to hide the need for independence of character.

5. What we may speak of as "average" children make up the fifth group. They are sufficiently responsive to ordinary influences to be teachable, they are not lacking in will power, but they do not possess any strongly marked characteristic, such as great strength of will, high emotional or intellectual capacity. Such children constitute the great majority. If they remain in this class throughout their later life, they will not do the pioneer work in the world; but many of them become reliable, trustworthy, helpful characters, fitting into their rightful groove in the whole social structure, not chafing at drudgery and at the pretty restrictions of daily life, as the more marked characters may tend to do, but making life altogether, for the majority of us, an easier and more cheerful business. As children, such individuals are easier to manage than those possessing more independent characters; they do not demand the same constant effort on the part of those in authority; they can appreciate and help the more original natures around, and by faithfully following in their lead, render the work of others more fruitful than it otherwise could be. Darwin tells us that if, in a flock, you find more than a certain number of leaders, in some way or other the flock suffers.

While we appreciate the leaders and allow for their development, we must then also see to it that every average child has his faculties sufficiently developed to enable him, as he grows older, to act with self-reliance and judgment, in those affairs of daily life in which he is called upon to act alone. He may never be a leader of many, but he should never be among the blindly led, who follow the leader when he is at fault.

All children can learn to be increasingly self-reliant; they can be taught to use their experience so as to increase materi-



ally their judgment, their powers of initiative, and their inventive capacity. At the start, they will often prefer that others suggest games or occupations, that others point out the line of duty. Gradually, with encouragement, they gain self-confidence, and even come to enjoy independence while they are still young, liking occasionally to lead rather than to follow. Grown-up people are often too ready to advise, too little aware of the loss of experience to the child, when he leans too much on others. "To be cast on our own resources is to be thrown into the lap of luxury," the late Sir William Jenner used to say. To develop the best in the children, they must combine responsiveness with self-dependence.

6. One group of children only is left—those who are weak in some definite direction. I do not mean those who are definitely lacking in intelligence, in a full equipment of perceptive faculties, whose training is recognized to be a special matter; but those who, normal in most respects, yet need particular care, in order to gain their complete and full development. They may be exceptionally nervous children, or weak in the power of concentrating their attention; they may be children failing to manifest affection, or weak in will power; or persistently obstinate, because lacking in the capacity of sufficiently utilizing their reason. How can such defects be remedied?

What of the nervous child? Wherein lies his weakness and his strength? How can we help him to be the best which is in him? Such a child is full of unknown terrors—of trains, or of dogs; of bands of music; or strange sights and sounds.

"Will you take care of me, Mother, and not let any animals come and bite me in the night?" asked Morris each night, when he was 3½.

Austen, when he was 3 years old, went to see a travelling circus, but when in the tent, refused to take off his hat. His mother, finding the big sailor hat in the way while holding him on the seat, pressed for it to come off. "Are you sure the elephants won't bite off my head?" he asked.

Malcolm, when he was 5, was staying at the seaside, and by chance heard some one speak of the incoming tide. He asked what "tides" meant, and afterwards, for two or three days, he



dared not leave his nurse's side lest the sea should come up suddenly and overwhelm him! No explanation could subdue his fears.

Such children are often readily thrown off their mental balance, not only under the influence of pleasurable excitement, but from lesser causes. The order of development of their mental qualities is irregular. They may, or may not, be naturally passionate, but they are readily hysterical, and their laughter may suddenly turn to tears. Unstable temperaments—yet often strong characters, when they have gained self-control—how can we deal with them? The cause of such a temperament is to be found in the extreme sensitiveness and lack of stability of their nervous systems in early childhood. This is frequently connected with physical delicacy—delicacy, which is often with care outgrown. The child's bodily system must be carefully built up and strengthened, his nervous system steadied, both directly and indirectly—directly, by insistence on self-control; indirectly, by the avoidance of undue excitement, by steady, quiet, loving discipline invariably maintained, by an ordered routine of life, and by long hours of rest and sleep. There is excessive power of imagination; if we provide healthy food for the imagination of such children, they will be less likely to create for themselves unknown terrors. Let them learn about animals, flowers and the world around them, let us tell them good and happy stories, around which, when they are tired at night, their imagination can play fearlessly. Gradually we can help their characters to grow stronger—and their timidity and excitability will pass away with greater experience, and the gaining of health and self-control. We shall be able to help such children by a wise interference; whereas neglect, or unwise interference, would have resulted in the harm being perpetuated.

Perhaps one of the most difficult types of children to train is the child who is unimpressionable, not because he is in any way stupid, impervious to impressions from without, but because he is extraordinarily lacking in the power of concentrating his attention. The will-power of such a scatter-brained child develops very slowly. Though his knowledge of right in early childhood may be fair, his capacity for doing the right, when his impulses are drawing him in the opposite direction, remains weak beyond the ordinary, because he lacks the power of



focussing his attention on what he knows he ought to do. Plenty of capacity for feeling, thought and will may be latent; but the power of application, of concentration, is lacking. Combined, may be, with a strong belief in himself and considerable obstinacy, there is a weakness of will, as far as any power to be trusted goes—all because he lacks this power of paying attention. Like R. L. Stevenson's donkey, who accompanied him on his travels through the Cevennes, he insists upon moving forward on the path of virtue at his own slow pace! Now and again, as with the donkey, Modestine, something, or some one, may serve to quicken him for a time, but he soon relaxes. Such children are often very charming, with their dainty baby ways, but they are difficult to train—they test the patience and perseverance of those responsible for their upbringing beyond all others—they are so slow to learn by experience. Day after day we persevere, teaching them obedience, perhaps by counting "one, two, three," having warned them that if they do not respond before we say "three"—in some way they will suffer. They always do suffer—yet, time after time, they still wait until after we have said "three" before they yield! But one day we count, "one, two—" and, to our surprise and pleasure, the child responds. We know that we have moved on just one step.

There is nothing to be done with such children but gradually to cultivate their powers of attention and deepen their natures all along the line. Let them play at drill, at soldiers, etc., send them easy messages and see that these are delivered accurately, make them do little tasks day by day which require finishing, and see that these are done well—a few years' training in the habit of attention will produce a marked change. Cultivate and deepen their affections by insisting that emotion must result in action. As they grow older, we must never be satisfied with their second best. Gradually cultivate in them those habits which require concentration—dressing and undressing, tidying away their toys, etc. The rate of development may be slow, but the difficulty is one which can be conquered and is well worth the conquering.

Sulky children also belong to this group. What can we do for them? We can deliberately cultivate their spontaneity,



their power of self-expression, their capacity for seeing the point of view of other people; at the same time that we prevent the habit of sulkiness from growing by avoiding unnecessary opposition. Self-expression in one direction will help to make self-expression in other directions easier. Let the child draw, mould with clay, make designs in his painting, try to write stories and tell tales as he grows older. We can stimulate his power of suggestion by encouraging his inventiveness in games. Gradually his nature will open out, he will become more spontaneous, less self-conscious, too happy in the enjoyment of his gradually developing powers to brood over difficulties. Perhaps, above all, we can train him to express his affection and cultivate such affection. A child with a loving nature, sensitive to the appreciation and feelings of others, is rarely, if ever, sulky. He must enjoy the companionship of other children, and learn to do for others—love grows by giving and doing more than by receiving—we can supply him with motives to action outside himself. He must learn self-control. Gradually, very gradually, his nature will develop, and he will grow into a juster appreciation of his own rights relatively to others, into a capacity for expressing his difficulties instead of dwelling on them. But the change is gradual, and can only be accomplished by indirect means—it is no good questioning or arguing with a sulky child—he wants to “draw the latch,” he does not want us to come in.

Another type of child, difficult to deal with and often particularly trying, is the mischievous child—we need to remind ourselves constantly that he may be “an ugly duckling” who will grow up, like the ducklings in Hans Andersen’s story, into a swan! The child who never gets into mischief, who never does anything he ought not to do, may be so “good” because he has not enough inventive capacity to think of mischief! and he may be equally lacking in original ideas in other directions. Such a child will not make any mark in the world as he grows up, and may prove weak in the face of temptation, because he is not quick-witted enough to see a way out. The mischievous child is full of original ideas, which he carries out without due thought for their ultimate effect, without due consideration for the rights of others. He must learn control, but his inventive capacity should be turned to good account.



Mrs. Bryant refers to this type of child in her essay on "Ugly Ducklings".

"Let me not be misunderstood to imply," she writes, "that we grown-up people are to lay down our comfort or convenience and allow young 'Mischief' to ride rampant over us, consoling ourselves with the reflection that mischief is liveliness turned wrong side out, and that it will turn right some day. Perhaps it will, if we leave it alone; but also perhaps it will not. We are no more to leave it alone, than we are to deal with it by trying to quench the life and spirit which are its positive sources. We are to deal with it, so far as we can, by quickening those sources of thought and feeling, the deficiency of which is its negative cause; and, for this, strict measures, as well as gentle, may sometimes be necessary."

What is involved in the lack of control shown in a child's passionate outbreaks? Do these mean that the child is merely self-indulgent and wishes to have his own way? Or do they mean that he is born with a hatred of external authority, with a strong will which he feels impelled to exercise freely—but that he has yet to gain the experience of life which will make his strong will also reasonable, which will teach him consideration for the rights of others equally with his own? If so, he only desires to govern himself, before he has the requisite knowledge to be capable of so doing; and such a desire should be respected, though it cannot be allowed to have its own way. The strength of will is good, the desire for self-government is good; but wisdom must first be gained. We need then to watch carefully to discover the cause of these passionate outbreaks and to see how they can be cured.

If the child has a strong individuality of his own, we must, first of all, see to it that the cause of his passion does not lie in our method of dealing with him. We may have increased his natural tendency to rebellion by frequent, irritating checks to his self-will, by the constant assertion of our personal will as such. Or we may have been unreasonably harsh, trying to break the child's will, instead of bringing it into harmony with our own. Or we may have been hasty and unjust. The tendency to a passionate mood may, or may not, be there—but in any case, we have made the tendency greater. What,



then, can be done? How is the lack of control to be remedied?

In the first place, self-control can only be acquired when there is quiet, even discipline; this must be sympathetic, entering into the child's life and difficulties, but unemotional. The laws governing the child's life must be as unvarying and impersonal as the laws of Nature. Under such circumstances, he knows that he might as well beat his head against a brick wall, as try to get his own will, when it is contrary to the law. Moreover, within the limits of the law, he finds freedom, the freedom for which he longs.

In the second place, our action in dealing with such children must be unhesitating. We must not let them see that we find it difficult to make up our mind, even should our decision turn out to be wrong; for the child's sake, we need to decide at once.

Norman, aged 4, a rebellious and passionate little lad, one night, after tea, wanted to go out for a walk with his Father. It was nearly his bedtime, and as he was generally only too ready for bed, his Mother felt that a walk at that time might be too much for him. On the other hand, his Father and he were such chums, it was such a treat for them to be together, the weather was beautiful, and being late once in a way might do no harm. So she hesitated, anxious to do the right. The mere hesitation, the possibilities the doubt opened out, of joy on the one hand, and disappointment on the other, were too much for Norman. He began to agitate to be allowed to go, showing at once by his behaviour that the going was distinctly undesirable. When his Mother decided against the walk, the storm of passion was terrible, such a storm as would never have occurred, had refusal been given at once.

It is an old saying that "children and fools should never see things half made"—neither should such strong-willed children such as these see a decision in the making. We must decide promptly and unwaveringly, there must be no change of plans.

Thirdly, when the child has sinned, we must see that our punishment is not too heavy; we must look at the punishment from the child's point of view, so as to realize whether it will appear just to him. Apparent injustice is certain to result in passion.

On one occasion, Stephen, between 4 and 5, had been, so



he thought, taking care of his Mother, who was ill in bed, and he had been greatly impressed with the responsibility of his position. All the morning he had kept very quiet, fetching little things that were wanted, etc. In the afternoon, while his mother was sleeping, he was in the nursery. There he behaved so badly—possibly as a result of being so abnormally good and quiet before—that his nurse said he could not go in to his Mother after tea, he would have to go straight to bed instead. His disappointment was great, but mingled with that was his sense of responsibility. Mother expected him to take care of her, who would look after her if he did not go? Thoughts of undue anxiety expressed themselves in his hysterical passion. Injustice, more than anything else, rouses feelings of rebellion in such a child.

Fourthly, we should not oppose a strong-willed child, unless it is necessary; avoid provocation and controversy wherever possible. In the case of the tiny child, we can turn his thoughts in some other direction. The watchful Mother or Nurse can tell by various signs when an outburst of temper is at hand. They can avoid as far as possible the kind of occasion which produces them; and when the storm is preparing—before it comes to a head, that is, before the child has been “naughty”—they can send him on some message, talk about something else, use their ingenuity to distract his attention, and the storm may blow over. This is often both possible, and advisable, while the child is very young: “The thing that [then] really matters is that he shall do the right thing in the right way, eat his supper, put on his clothes, go to bed, not lose his temper”.<sup>1</sup> But the time comes when the child will know that he is being managed; when, too, the strength and persistence of his desires are such that he cannot be so diverted—then it is too late so to manage him. But he should, by that time, have learnt much self-control and for the most part be able to manage himself. Only on occasions, (if we avoid rousing his passionate impulses unnecessarily), will he show his passion. On such occasions, he must learn that he has done wrong, and must suffer accordingly. Some punishment must be found which is effective, effective enough to check the passion ere it finds vent. The nature of the punishment depends upon the child.

<sup>1</sup> “Thought-turning,” by Dr. Helen Webb.



This negative side of training passionate children, by avoiding anything which would arouse their rebellious impulse and punishing its exhibition when it occurs, is after all only one aspect of the question. If the passion be due to a strong uncontrollable force of will within the child, that strong will is good; it must be fostered and developed; but it must be supplemented by reason, it must be brought into harmony with the other wills around it. This is a gradual process, and indirect rather than direct. The child must be taught self-control in many ways—in eating and drinking, in the endurance of pain, in the bearing of disappointment, in consideration for others, in his personal habits, in his personal expenditure. And, all the while, he must be conscious that we are governed by reason in our dealings with him; he must be helped to understand why he was wrong, when he desired wrongly; his will must be respected and given scope and opportunity for action.

Whether the defect of character lies in a lack of control over passion, an undue intensity of feeling, which knows not how to express itself, an uncontrolled imagination, or a lack of the power of concentrating attention, we can do much by an understanding of the difficulty; even though, in the matter of treatment, no definite laws can be laid down, even though there is no golden rule for obtaining full development of character. But, perhaps, if we realize this one fact, that training is a matter of insight rather than restriction, we have gained the one thing needful—a deep consciousness that we must ever try to understand. To the children's inner natures, as to the plants, "gifts and powers are given, each different from each; each good in its kind; each, if rightly carried out, bearing its part in the full perfection of the kingdom which is boundless, the plan which is harmony". It seems to be part of that plan that we, of an older generation, should help the younger, by education and training, to become "the best after their kind". Study is needed, and the fruit of patient study lies in the slow gaining of confidence—a confidence which works hand in hand with humility—yet a confidence which we need, lest, in an exaggerated sense of unworthiness, we shirk so great a task.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE CHILD'S POINT OF VIEW.

Importance of right point of view in childhood—Its influence on later life—Our own influence over the child, both conscious and unconscious—His point of view, the result of his personal experience—Need on our part for recognition of, and respect for, his standpoint—His response to our sympathy and understanding—Variability in the child's outlook on life—Importance to him in early years of an ordered universe—Effect of temperament on outlook—Uncritical optimism of childhood—Predominance of feeling over reason—Predominance of self in early years—Conclusion.

It was Christmas Day, and the children were all gathered round the table for their Christmas dinner. The Father took up the carving-knife to carve the turkey, all watching him eagerly; when, suddenly, he thought he would improve the occasion by telling the children about the events of the day. Solemnly he laid down the carver, and began to preach. The children's faces fell, the turkey was getting cold, they were excited and wanted their dinner. One by one, he asked them questions; even Mother began to fidget. But rebellion was rising in one little heart. When Nan was asked: "Do you know Who was born to-day, Nan?" "I don't know, and I don't care," she said, "I want my dinner! Daddy, when *are* you going to carve the turkey?" Her Father was shocked, and said she could have no dinner until she answered. There she sat, sullenly refusing to reply; and when her Father took her and put her outside the room, she only kicked the door, and screamed out: "I don't care! I don't care! I hate God! I love the Devil! I do! I do! I do!" Her Mother was distressed, her Father angry, the other children cried in sympathy with Nan. All Christmas joy was gone. Nan was whipped and put to bed, with no Christmas dinner. Impulsive, rebellious, little Nan, who loved the Bible stories well, when she was told them



at the right time. Her standpoint was fundamentally different from her Father's; and that, he failed to realize.

It requires a considerable effort of the imagination to look back on our past life and, in the light of our present knowledge, recall our past experiences and our past judgments, so that we may realize how our point of view, our emotional attitude towards the circumstances of life, have changed with our growth. Our own point of view, even at the present time, intimate though we are with it, is hard enough to realize with any degree of clearness; and the very effort to realize it puts into too definite shape, crystallizes, as it were, that which is, in reality, shapeless, plastic and intangible.

If our own point of view is so hard to picture, it is still more difficult to picture that of the children. They have less power of self-expression than we have; their vision, in some directions clear and sharply defined, in other directions is less accurate and more limited; imagination plays a larger, memory, a smaller, part than it does with us. Moreover, in childhood, emotion dominates thought, to an extent which we often find it almost impossible to realize in practice. We can train ourselves more easily to sit in the children's chair, as it were, and see with the children's eyes than to *feel* with the children's *feelings*.

Impossible, then, though it may be, either to describe intimately our own present standpoint, to realize our change of view, or to enter completely into that of the children, it is yet not merely worth while, but, in the case of the children, absolutely necessary, to make the effort. The point of view of the man or of the woman has its origin in early childhood. The man, who is conscious in his manhood of his duties as a citizen, has probably first realized in childhood his responsibility towards his fellows in home and school. The man, who in adult life is conscious of his personal responsibility for his own character, has probably first realized in childhood the need of self-mastery. The child's point of view *matters*, not merely because his point of view as a child will influence his actions as a child, and therefore make him a desirable or undesirable inmate of the home, but also because the child is the father of the man. It is needful then that his point of view, however provisional, however limited and often untrue in detail, must be lofty—as



far as we can help to make it so. As the child grows from childhood into youth and manhood, his point of view must widen and develop and become nobler; his experience of life must not make him more self-seeking, less appreciative, with less of hope and faith and love. Although he may try to understand the lower standard set in the outer world, he must be able to depend upon himself and the standards within him; he must be *in* the world, but not *of* it.

We are, to a large extent, responsible for the child's point of view in early years, responsible both with regard to the direct and conscious influence which we exert over him, and with regard to the more potent, though unconscious, influence which we exert through the example of our own life. Repeatedly, in the earlier chapters, I have laid stress on our unconscious influence over the child. The child learns more from what we unconsciously teach, than from what we deliberately intend him to learn. Children reflect, to a large extent, in their point of view, that of the grown-up people around them.

"No irresistible Energy hailed *them* to church on Sundays,"<sup>1</sup> yet they went, and seemed to find no pleasure in so doing. If this is the result of the child's observation, can church-going be regarded by him as anything more than mere convention? If "Father" always expects "Mother" to wait on him hand and foot, grumbles if anything goes wrong, and rarely expresses gratitude, the boy's point of view of his Mother is likely to be similar to that of his Father. If we grumble at work, how can the children realize the blessedness of work? If we are selfish in our interests, are not the ever-ready sympathies of childhood likely to have died out by the time they have grown older, and their powers are ripe to use those sympathies for good?

"I didn't know Mrs. — was a mother, mothers always look bovvered [bothered]," said a small boy of 3, unconsciously summarising his intimate experience of one particular mother.

But I want to dwell, in this last chapter, not so much on our unconscious influence over the child, as on the necessity for a deliberate effort on our part to realize his point of view, and in particular his point of view of us, as we come into con-

<sup>1</sup> "The Golden Age," Kenneth Graham.



tact with him. Our dealings with him are only effectual in so far as he understands us and responds to us; he will only respond if we understand him.

"I've often wondered," says Mr. Dooley, "what a little boy thinks about us that call ourselves grown-up, because we can't grow up any more. We wake him up in the morning whin he wants to sleep. We make him wash his face whin he knows it don't need washing thin as much as it will later, and we sind him back to comb his hair in a way that he don't approve iv at all. We fire him off to school just about the time iv day whin any wan ought to be out iv dures. . . . An' so it goes. If he don't do any iv these things or if he doesn't do thim th' way ye think is th' right way, some one hits him or wants to. Talk about happy childhood! How wud ye like to have twenty or thirty people issuin' foolish ordhers to ye, makin' ye do things ye didn't want to do, and niver understandin' at all why it was so? 'Tis like livin' on this earth an' being ruled be the inhabitants of Mars. He has his wurruld, ye can bet on that, an' 'tis a mighty important wurruld."

We do *not* understand. We forget that what are important matters to us are the merest trivialities to children! They are busy building a shed or an aviary in the garden! the hammer is upstairs, or the nails, or some pieces of wood, which are just the very size for their purpose and which they have only just remembered, or a hinge is wanted, and there is one which can be taken off an old box lid, which is lying in the nursery. The things they need are so many! and they are sure to be upstairs! In their eagerness to get on with their building, what a trivial and trying matter it must seem to them to stop and wipe their boots thoroughly on the mat every time they go indoors. How ridiculous it seems to them for the housewife to urge that all these things should have been thought of beforehand, that it wears out the carpets when they keep on going up and down-stairs!

Peggy, aged 6, was poorly in bed. John, aged 7, was busy making a boat in the play-room. He was making it out of a big wooden box, a box fraught with great possibilities to John! He was fitting up a piece of old tablecloth for a sail; the following summer, he would take the boat out to sea; it was heavy, it would cost perhaps 10s. to take it to the seaside; but it was



worth it, not a doubt of that! He could picture himself tossing on the waves—he thought it would be safest to venture out in his bathing suit for the first time, in case it leaked a bit! but he was going to try and fill up all the cracks. And so he hammered away. Peggy, from her bed near by, heard the hammering; she was interested and called to John. He told her all about it; the two keen prospective sailors thrilled with the joy of anticipation! and, of course, Peggy wanted to see the boat. With infinite pains, John dragged that heavy box along the passage to Peggy's room, (should *we* have taken such trouble?) pulling up the stair carpet, scratching the paint on the floor, tearing the wall-paper—but Peggy saw the boat! John was blamed; but what trivialities to *him* must paint and wall-paper be, when he is filled with the desire of creation!

Florence, only a little over 2 years old, was to go out for a walk. She had put her dolly in its cradle in a cosy corner, now she must leave the doll and come at once, for Nurse was waiting to get her ready. But Florence would not come. "Chif, chif,"—she cried, and ran this way and that, looking for something—Nurse knew not what; and screaming in her agitation, when Nurse insisted on games being at an end. Games forsooth! as if Dolly were a mere plaything, even to Baby Florence! Florence refused to come; Nurse used force; Florence only screamed more loudly. What was it that Nurse did not understand?—Florence had mislaid, and could not find, the handkerchief ("chif") which she knew ought to be under her dolly's chin. The baby was *never* left in his cradle without a handkerchief; Florence knew that. She herself was never put to rest without a handkerchief. Could she neglect her baby? The nurse had failed to enter into the child's point of view.

We are bound to modify the actions and character of the child for the sake of the society of which he is a member, but we must understand him; our influence over him increases year by year if only we understand.

I am often asked, when lecturing on these subjects, to explain why the children in so many of the stories which I quote were so responsive to treatment. What if Nancy, for instance, had refused to sit in the chair into which her mother lifted her? What if the children, for whom we may judge rest or solitude



to be desirable, refused to see the matter in that light, and made so much fuss that the rest or the solitude became harmful, rather than beneficial?

The only answer one can give is, that if we have sufficient insight and understand the children, we can win them over more and more on to our side. It is a matter of kindly consideration and sympathy in *little* things; of never interfering unless it is absolutely necessary; of not expecting the impossible; of confident expectation of goodness rather than undue insistence upon goodness. A mother, leaving her children in charge of the nurse for a day, remarked to one of them, who was an awkward little customer to deal with: "Try and be a good little lad while I am away". "It all depends on the way I am handled," was the quick reply; "I'll be all right, if *she* is all right." Kindness and wise sympathy on our part, generally speaking, beget helpfulness and response from the child. A want of sympathy and the "lust of power" on our part arouses a desire for rebellion.

A big strong lad of 9 years old was told one day by his Mother to go some little errand. He was just going to obey, when suddenly a thought struck him: "What would you do if I didn't do what you told me? You couldn't *make* me do it now that I am big, unless I chose!" "No, I know I couldn't," his Mother replied; "but you always do finally what I want."—"Even when you won't most, you do, don't you?" she might have said, paraphrasing the story from "Punch"—"Well, why do I then?" he urged. "Because," his Mother replied, "you know now in your heart that I shouldn't ask you to do anything which was not right and reasonable; you know too that I have always tried to be fair to you, and you know that I understand and sympathize with your desire to use your own will, rather than follow mine." The lad thought for a minute. "Yes," he said, "the inner part of me that I don't understand says you're quite right. I *do* choose to do what you ask me, because I feel that you love and understand, but my mind didn't know that before. It's awfully interesting!" He was a boy who, for the most part, always obeyed his Mother; but a lad, more rebellious and self-willed by nature, was never born.

The consciousness that his individual needs and powers



are not merely taken into account, but respected, gradually brings the most rebellious nature into harmony with the law, if the law is just and right, leaving ample room for freedom. Sometimes the child is moody and cross-grained from bodily disturbances; capricious, troublesome, the very opposite of docile, from physical causes. These must be wisely dealt with. But putting these aside, more than half the difficulties of training the most unmanageable children would disappear, if we recognized and respected their point of view.

We too early lose touch with our own childhood: we forget its joys and its temptations: we are often unnecessarily hard upon the children. It is such a simple matter when anything goes wrong, and we know not why, to put the blame upon some child!

A little lad was found one morning by a lady friend sobbing bitterly by his garden gate. She stopped to inquire what was wrong. "Father will be so angry with me when he comes back home," he sobbed out. "Why, dear, what have you done?" she asked. "I haven't done anything, but I know he'll be angry," and the tears broke out afresh, "it isn't me this time, it *really* isn't me. A new baby has come to our house, and Father is away. He'll be so angry when he comes back, and he always says it's my fault when anything goes wrong!"

We want the hammer and it is missing: probably one of the children has had it, we say at once! A chair or a jug is found broken, no one had confessed about it, probably one of the children was responsible! It may be so. There was no doubt much truth in a certain father's attitude towards his mischievous son, when he said that he might as well whip him whenever he came across him, because, if he wasn't in mischief at that moment, he was probably just out of it, or would be in it before long! But what of the child's point of view? Is it not often the case that we give the dog a bad name, and he endeavours to earn it?

"These elders" (the Olympians), writes Kenneth Graham, "were further removed from us [children] than the kindly beasts who shared our natural existence in the sun. This estrangement was fortified by an abiding sense of injustice, arising from the refusal of the Olympians ever to defend, to retract, to admit themselves in the wrong, or to accept similar concessions



on our part. . . . [Even when the orchard didn't produce its usual quota of apples] the failures of Nature were not infrequently ascribed to *us* !"

But to enter all the time into the child's point of view often needs a bigger effort than we realize.

Let us attempt to consider in detail some respects in which the child's point of view differs from ours. Part of the distinguishing mark of his point of view to start with, as compared with that of a youth or man, is, as I have already said, its absence of any definiteness. In some respects, it was different to-day from what it was yesterday; this evening, when he was weary with work and play, it was different from what it was this morning at breakfast-time; in the middle of the morning, when the rain began, and he knew that the match must be postponed, the whole aspect of life was changed for him. It changes according to the particular circumstances of the time, it varies with his physical condition, his state of feeling. And yet he has an individuality of his own, a point of view of his own, however provisional. His own point of view, his *average* point of view, as we might express it, is indefinite enough, depending as it does on his predominating mood or feeling, which is in itself year by year undergoing modification, and on his past experiences, which widen from day to day; but his point of view at any particular moment is more variable still. This variability we need to understand and reckon with. We need to adapt our actions, as far as possible, so as to avoid discord with it. The child himself has not the power to control the circumstances, which are modifying from time to time his average point of view, nor can he understand, in the way in which a grown person is able, the effect of circumstances upon him. We need to do this for him.

If, while he is still smarting, we begin to tell him *why* we punished him, and how much we hate to do it, can he at that moment understand and believe us? If, when we find the nursery untidy, the children tired and cross and ready for bed, we choose *that* time to impress upon them the duty of tidiness, the wastefulness of disorder, can they then respond? Is the end of a meal, when the child is perhaps more than satisfied, the time for him to appreciate the wrong of waste,



when he has more on his plate than he can manage to eat? Was ever a child impressed by being told at such a moment that many little children would be glad to have what he has left on his plate? A penny, held close in front of our eyes, will obscure the sun; one grief, one annoyance, one acute sensation, sufficiently vivid in the focus of consciousness, will distort the child's point of view. If then we want to influence him, we must choose those times in which he is ready to respond, in which his mind is open to receive impressions. There must be mutual understanding.

There is one matter which we grown-ups, with our wider experience, often fail to realize, and that is, the importance to the tiny child, with his very limited experience, of the habitual relations of time and place, cause and effect. For instance, a small child, who is in the habit of having his mug of milk at bedtime in the day nursery, may object vigorously if expected to drink the same in the night nursery! Another, who is accustomed to have her chair in a certain position while her hair is being brushed at night, may forcibly rebel if made to sit anywhere else, or if the chair is put anywhere else! Such associations of time and place constitute for them the order of their little world; their narrow experience demands an ordered universe, or they are all at sea. As the child grows and his interests become more varied, his imagination keener, the brushing of hair, the drinking of milk, gradually become more or less mechanical, his thoughts are elsewhere while he is doing it. The particular cup he drinks out of, the chair in which he sits, then no longer matter; freedom to carry out his ideas is what he now most desires. But while he is small, let him have his ordered universe, even in matters which to us are trivial and unimportant; when he is older, let him enjoy the maximum of freedom, even at the cost of a little additional trouble to ourselves. Their point of view is necessarily limited by their experience; but it is natural to them, let us respect it. The child's outlook must be the result of *his* experience, not ours; of *his* special interests and not ours; of *his* temperament and not ours. We are so anxious that he should become his *best* self, that in dwelling on the best, we lose sight of the *self*. Forcing is harmful.



Yet it is possible to *over*-recognize a child's individuality. We cannot allow a boy of 12 to give all his time to reading and study, poring over his books, and neglecting friends and games and physical exercise, simply because he is following his own bent. The boy who is by nature a bully, cannot be allowed to bully unchecked. The girl who is by nature vain and selfish, must learn to think of others. We cannot allow the children to ride rough-shod over us, simply because in so doing they are exercising their natural impulses! Our aim is to combine a recognition of individuality with the shaping of the child's character, according to the ideal ends of the society in which he lives; to help him to develop himself, even through some repression of self. While it is true that we injure the child by thrusting upon him our grown-up ideals as such, the opposite tendency of leaving him mainly to guide himself, according to his own standpoint, is equally pernicious. It is right that we should insist in childhood on the doing of many things which are needed in later life, if that life is to be lived at its best. The doing of work for the sake of the work, the doing of right because it *is* right, cannot be begun too early. The child's habit of living influences his point of view for good or bad as much as, perhaps even more than, his point of view influences his life. Forcing of grown-up ideals upon children is bad; recognition of their respective individualities is good; but some restraint is needful. We must find the happy mean between repression and development, and we must above all understand the children and their standpoint.

The point of view from which we look at life is chiefly the result of our prevailing temperament. Here again we grown-ups differ fundamentally from children. As we grow older, we more and more look ahead, and estimate, with a varying amount of caution, the results of our actions. Children, for the most part, dwell intensely in the present: they are uncritical optimists. I am aware that, for short periods, they are equally uncritical pessimists, when their desires are frustrated, since childish griefs are keen; but the pessimistic mood vanishes like magic in the face of some slight diversion. The way in which a child, after the first pangs of disappointment are over, proceeds to make the best of things, reminds one of the optimist fly, who, instead of



drowning in the bowl of milk, kicked and kicked, until his active movements resulted in the creation of tiny lumps of butter, on which he floated to the edge of the bowl and jumped off!

A cherished mechanical engine ceases to "work"; tears are dried and the engine is taken to pieces, its "works" diverted to some other purpose, and the last state of that engine is an improvement on the first! The pet canary dies and the children are for a time inconsolable; but gradually the optimistic mood reasserts itself in the thrilling interest of stuffing the bird, or planning a grand funeral! This delightful optimism in children is closely connected with the vividness of the child's imagination, his keen zest for play, his superabundant energy, his readiness to act, his unthinking spontaneity; and it is this same power of vivid imagining which make things, which are unimportant to us, important to them, and vice-versa.

"To anything but appearances, [these elders] were blind. . . . They never set foot within firwood or hazel copse, nor dreamt of the marvels hid therein. The mysterious sources, sources as of old Nile, that fed the duck-pond, had no magic for them. They were unaware of Indians, nor recked they anything of bisons or of pirates (with pistols!), though the whole place swarmed with such portents!" To grown-up people, a sofa is a sofa and nothing more, merely a place to rest when they are weary. To the child, it is full of possibilities. It is a ship in mid-ocean, facing the perils of the storm, and the children are on a perilous voyage of discovery; or it is the stage coach, and the lonely travellers within are protected from hordes of fierce highwaymen by the brave driver on the box, at the far end of the sofa; or it is a camp-bed in a hospital on the battlefield. The children's world is often a mystery to grown-up people; but how full of interests their world is. "For us," writes Kenneth Graham, "for us, perhaps, the sun does not shine so brightly as it used, the trackless meadows of old time have shrunk and dwindled to a few poor acres"—stocks and shares, the income-tax, the wear and tear of carpets, the cost of boots or the latest fashions have acquired an interest greater than that of imaginary battles with fierce imaginary foes—but need we become Olympians, can we not try to understand the child?

Another interesting point to observe in connexion with the



effect of temperament in childhood on the child's point of view, is the predominance of feeling over reason, to which I have already referred at the beginning of this chapter. As the child's mind grows, a stream of impressions is constantly pouring into it from without, some of which are naturally interesting, to some of which he is forced by those in charge of him to attend. Those impressions influence the child most which are most closely associated with his feelings, whether pleasurable or painful. Those which contribute to his desires, his play, his imaginative life, result in pleasurable emotions; those which hinder his desires result in painful emotions. Very gradually, he assimilates these repeated experiences according to his special temperament, according to his upbringing; and groups them, more or less accurately, into certain general conclusions on life and those persons who are round about him. Such conclusions are, however, arrived at more through *feeling* than by *reason*. The experiences which count, which are remembered and stored up in the child's judgments on life, are those in which the element of emotion has been pronounced in one way or the other. Suppose that Father's home-coming at night is always connected in the child's experience with a general shout of "Hurrah, here's Father," with a romp before bed-time or cuddles by the fire in the arm-chair, while small hands are thrust into big pockets to find "surprises"—the thought of Father is full of joy; the child's point of view of him will be that he is a real good sort; and this feeling-element will persist and colour the child's judgment, not only of his own father, but of fathers in general.

But suppose, on the other hand, that Father is occupied with hard brain work at home, and the children often see him when he is grave and preoccupied, suppose they have to keep quiet lest they should disturb him, and, now and again, when romps are getting too noisy, they catch a glimpse of a worried face at the study door, a feeling of awe and distance will colour the child's point of view of his Father, which may make any close comradeship difficult, even in later life. When the child concluded that "Mothers always looked bothered," what did he mean but that the one mother, who mattered most to that particular child, who—because she looked "bothered"—had spoilt the fun so often, weighed in his judgment more



than the many other mothers with whom he was acquainted, but who did not matter to him so much. Children's logic is *not* logical; they generalize—we may complain—from sadly insufficient premises; feeling, not reason, determines their conclusions. We must, then, see to it, as far as possible, that, in the child's mind, the right feeling-element is associated with the right things in life; that life at home and work at school are happy; that generosity, self-dependence, mutual helpfulness, all lead to increased happiness. This will not be the case if we are slack and capricious in our discipline, or if we make undue demands on the child's nature. If a boy is obliged to put a large part of his pocket-money into the missionary box; if he is forced to share all his toys with his brothers and sisters, whether he desires or no; will generosity be associated with a feeling of pleasure? Professor Sully tells a story of a child who had been promised sixpence when she could play her scales without fault. She succeeded in the exploit on her sixth birthday. The sixpence was given to her, but, soon after, her mother suggested that she should spend the money in fruit to give to her (the mother's) invalid friend!<sup>1</sup> Was this fair? Would she *enjoy* using her money in this way?

The child's strongest impressions are received within the home, his happiness depends, to an extent which we sometimes hardly realize, on our understanding of his point of view. Yet, for all his dependence, he is often at times extraordinarily self-centred. "Self" looms large in his little horizon, and, for a time, this is right and natural. Two boys, aged 5 and 3, were playing in their garden, swinging on the gate. A gentleman, who knew them a little, stopped in passing, and told them it was not safe. In the elder boy's point of view, this passer-by belonged to that class of persons who have no right to exercise authority. He retorted rudely, and the gentleman replied that, if he spoke in that way, he would tell his Father. "My Father is nothing to me," said the mite in a lofty tone. In an awe-struck whisper, as the gentleman passed on, his younger brother said: "Isn't he, Johnnie, isn't your Father nothing to *you*?"

A devoted aunt and mother had been playing cricket on a hot summer's afternoon with a small lad of 3, denying themselves gladly for the sake of giving him pleasure. In a short

<sup>1</sup> "Studies of Childhood," p. 292.



time, without even saying "Thank you," the youngster suddenly threw down his bat—"I've had enough of this soft game!" was his sole remark.

Gratitude is a highly elaborated virtue, difficult to acquire; and, except in so far as it is merely a sense of favours to come, it implies a distinct realization of the other person's point of view as well as our own. We have no right to *expect* this, even though we ought to *encourage* it, in a small child, who is only just beginning to be able to realize himself. Absence of gratitude is a natural phase in the child's development. We should no more regard it as necessarily a fault in him at this early age not to be truly grateful, than we regard it as a fault that he cannot go for a twenty-mile walk like ourselves. Gratitude is a virtue which needs to be gradually acquired; the child's point of view at the start is necessarily limited.

Only a few words more, in conclusion, on the influence of temperament. Where the temperament is specially difficult—sulky, passionate, intensely strong-willed, grasping or abnormally egotistical—it is bound to influence the child's point of view; and it is a mistake to worry over the latter, until education has modified the former. Right living, the gradual gain of self-mastery, the unconscious influence of work faithfully done, the daily strengthening of good impulses and weakening of bad ones, gradually modify the child's character. His temperament is *not* like his shadow, away from which he cannot get. His character alters, year by year, and with it, all unconsciously, his outlook on life.

Peter, as a small boy of 8 or 9, was unduly envious of riches. After being out to tea with any of his friends who were "better off" than his own people, he would come home unhappy. His parents were "comfortably off"; but he wished for more than comfort—expensive toys, plenty of pocket-money, luxurious living, motor-bicycles, were that for which he longed! It was pointed out to him that he could not expect to be rich when he grew up, except as the result of his own hard work; and that the time to begin to work was then and there, if he wished in manhood to attain his end. Poor Peter, he preferred a life of pleasure to work! But he buckled to, the desire for future wealth helping to spur him on; and as he acquired the habit of conscientious work, his



point of view changed. There was no longer time to dwell on the desire for wealth for its own sake, other and more urgent needs were awaking higher desires in him, as his character developed in the doing of honest work.

If the example which we set the children, and which they unconsciously accept, is, as far as we can make it, a lofty one—then, as long as the boy does his duty faithfully, putting his best energies into his life, we need not be *over-anxious* as to his point of view. His point of view influences his actions; but his actions, to an even greater extent, react upon his point of view, and these we can largely control in early years: temperament is, after all, only one of the factors which determine his outlook.

These, then, are the conclusions to which we are finally brought:—

The child's point of view should be lofty, and, as he grows older, it should widen, strengthen, remaining free from self-seeking.

In so far as his natural temperament tends to detract from the loftiness of his standpoint, we must help him to strengthen the better side of his nature, to acquire mastery over the weaker side.

Since his actions influence his point of view to an even greater extent than his point of view influences his actions, we must insist in childhood on the doing of many things which are right in themselves, even though the child, from his own standpoint, cannot understand their importance.

In so far as we exert our *unconscious* influence over him through our actions, words, and even our thoughts, and thus affect his point of view, we must realize the necessity of a high standard of life and thought for ourselves.

In so far as we, in our deliberate training of the child, *consciously* modify his actions and impulses to action, which, in their turn, influence his outlook on life, our dealings with him are more effective when we enter into and understand his point of view, and the extent to which, and manner in which, it differs from our own.

But, in striving to influence the growing child for good, we must ever beware of exerting an *undue* influence. The child's point of view should be his own. Even though some restraint is necessary, freedom to develop is even more necessary. He should preserve his own individuality.



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